



THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT FATIMA

SCIENCE AND THE FACTS

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**THE WHOLE TRUTH
ABOUT FATIMA**

**VOLUME I
SCIENCE AND THE FACTS**

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FOREWORD

May 13, 1917: Three children of the hamlet of Aljustrel, near Fatima in Portugal, tend their sheep at the Cova da Iria. Lucy, the eldest of the trio, is only ten years old, and her two cousins, Francisco and Jacinta, are nine and seven. It is hardly surprising that these cheerful and ingenuous children who were also very pious, would become the object of the predilection of the Queen of Heaven, who would appear to them six times in a row, from May 13 to October 13, to pass on to them Her Message.

What is more “natural” for us Catholics than these heavenly manifestations, to which we are so accustomed? They recall to our minds a long and marvellous history... That of St. Joan of Arc and her Voices, for the salvation of France. One century later, in the New World, there was the apparition to the poor Indian Juan Diego, the seer of Tepeyac to whom Our Lady of Guadalupe gave the signal favour of imprinting Her Miraculous Image on his tilma, which was made of rough cloth. Soon, under the reign of Louis XIV, the Sacred Heart will in turn manifest itself to a humble religious of Paray-le-Monial, St. Margaret Mary.

Finally, in the last century, an incomparable series of apparitions of the Most Holy Virgin makes this supernatural element quite familiar to us. And we recall with emotion the chosen souls, so simple and innocent, who had the privilege of being Her witnesses: St. Catherine Labouré, in the chapel of rue du Bac; Mélanie and Maximin, on the mountain of La Salette; the angelic Bernadette, at the grotto of Massabielle, Lourdes; and at Pontmain, during the starry night of January 17, 1871, almost all the children of the village.

The events of Fatima fit into this harmonious sequence of supernatural apparitions with which Heaven is accustomed to visiting the earth. Once again, God chose as His three messengers, three children who could neither read nor write, to remind the world of the desires of His Heart and to make known the requests of His Most Holy Mother.

And yet, for one who studies closely the events of Fatima, it appears clearly that this manifestation of the Virgin Mary, the most spectacular one that ever took place, occupies a unique and truly extraordinary place in the history of our time.

For here, as in the Gospel, it is by unprecedented miracles that God expresses His Will to be heard and obeyed. From the beginning of the world, nowhere had

anyone seen the equal of these divine signs. This incomparable miracle, predicted three months in advance as the certain proof and divine guarantee of the apparitions and of the Message of Our Lady, took place on October 13, 1917, in broad daylight, before seventy thousand witnesses, who were both astonished and enraptured: the prodigious “dance of the sun”, an historical fact as undeniable as it is stupefying, and inexplicable from the standpoint of purely natural forces.

Fatima is equally extraordinary for the scope of its great Secret, which is also without precedent. Since July 13, 1917, this unique Secret, in three distinct parts, dominates our whole history. A prophetic herald of divine chastisements which threaten us, along with magnificent promises of salvation, on the one condition that the simple requests of Our Lady, so clear and precise, finally be fulfilled – this great Secret describes for us our whole past and explains the whole present drama the world is going through: for we have witnessed and are actually living through the time of errors, wars and persecutions stirred up by Soviet Russia, predicted in 1917 at a time when nobody could have imagined them.

With a clarity that is altogether divine, the Blessed Virgin Mary there reveals to us in the Secret everything necessary to our souls for their eternal salvation, to our nations for their temporal well-being, and finally everything necessary to the Church for its victory over the powers of hell, which have been unchained. For it is surely the Church and its present crisis that is the subject of the “third secret”, still kept hidden at the Vatican.

And the prophecy does not stop with these tragic events of the present. It announced that not far off is a happy conclusion, an era of peace, through the conversion of Russia and the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Thus, it is a marvellous and truly extraordinary message of hope.

In short, Fatima commands our attention, as it has commanded the attention of the Church unceasingly since 1917. It has commanded our attention right up to the day of the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II, which fell precisely on the anniversary of the apparitions, and which led the Holy Father to Fatima a year later, on May 13, 1982.

Faced with the event of Fatima, nobody could remain indifferent without giving proof of a strange levity of spirit, if not a blameworthy cowardice. No, it is clear that we must find out, with certitude, the truth. For if it is a question of true and

supernatural apparitions, why not hear with docility this great Message of Our Lady and give it the attention it deserves? Thus, before all else Fatima imposes upon us the question of its veracity. And here, we must be insistent: its veracity stems neither from sentiment, nor from faith or even from devotion: but first of all from verifiable historical facts. This is the spirit in which we have undertaken and conducted this whole study.

«SCIENCE AND THE FACTS»

Our contemporaries are right. In this area, the facts must be studied with rigor and precision, without evading any difficulty, or dismissing any objection without an examination. With this end in view, and to respond to this legitimate expectation, our first volume includes a rigorous critical exposé.

When it concerns a supernatural event of such importance – and if the apparitions of Fatima are true in their entirety, they surely constitute the most important supernatural event of the century – it will not be in vain to carefully examine the various testimonies by which we come to know it, going over them with the “fine-tooth comb” of scientific criticism, to form a just idea of their worth. The best way to do this is to lay out in detail, with the greatest objectivity, all the arguments of those who have pretended to destroy its credibility.

On the subject of Fatima, this critical opposition was more violent than for any other of the great contemporary Marian apparitions. The major texts of the adversaries of Fatima, published in Dutch and in Italian, have never been translated. Only the negative conclusions of these authors, summed up in 1952 in an article intended for popular consumption, have been retained and propagated by certain theologians or publicists *a priori* hostile to the apparitions and Message of Fatima, while at Rome, as we shall see, they have continued to more or less directly influence the Popes themselves, from Pius XII to John Paul II. Thus it is useful, and even indispensable, to go back to the sources, to present the whole controversy with exactitude.

The advantage of this detailed criticism, which shows the worthlessness of all the arguments advanced against the reality of the miracles and the credibility of the witnesses, is to make the supernatural origin of the apparitions and Message of Fatima even more striking and unquestionable.

However this preliminary exposé, which is necessarily somewhat arduous, may disturb some readers, who wish to go to the historical part right away. In this case they may begin right at the second part, entitled “The Facts” [see publisher's note at the end of this foreword]. This will place them right at the beginning of the fascinating history of the events of Fatima, their historical context and the account of the apparitions, as well as the great solar miracle of October 13, 1917.

Let us add one more remark: perhaps some reader might object that, being favourably disposed *a priori* to the apparitions of Fatima, it is impossible for us to properly conduct an impartial critical investigation. How can we answer this suspicion?

First of all, it is unthinkable for us to go back on our original confidence in the apparitions and Message of Fatima, considering the repeated approvals of the Catholic hierarchy. We can say however that, since the decisions of the Church in this domain have no guarantee *a priori* of infallibility, our confidence would have quickly vanished had it encountered decisive criticisms. Originally the objections against Fatima had strongly impressed us. It was only the second time around, having weighed the objections against a broader body of evidence, that we saw how really feeble they were.

It was then that we understood the necessity of refuting the objections at the very beginning of our exposition, citing all our sources [see publisher's note at the end of this foreword]. The reader will be able to see for himself that we set forth the most cogent arguments of the adversaries of Fatima; then we cite the responses of its defenders, and finally we reproduce the documents themselves. Thus nothing is stopping those who would contest the validity of our conclusions from going back to our sources themselves, and showing – if they can! – where our own proofs are faulty. As for saying that we cannot be objective, since we are resolutely in favour of Fatima, that is a crude example of the fallacy of “begging the question”: it presupposes, without any reason, that an impartial study on Fatima cannot establish the supernatural character of what took place there. The truth is, that after a painstaking historical investigation, we firmly assert the authenticity of Fatima because this conclusion objectively imposes itself by solid and indisputable proofs.

THE SECRET AND THE CHURCH (1917-1942)

The apparitions of Fatima are also extraordinary, as we will show in Volume II, because of the sanctity of the little seers, which is so endearing. Francisco and Jacinta, who have been dead since 1919 and 1920, will undoubtedly be the first children who are not martyrs to receive the honors of the altar, to say nothing of Lucy, who is still living today in the Carmel of Coimbra, and has always showed herself perfectly worthy of her great mission.

Fatima is extraordinary also for the superabundant graces of the pilgrimages there, which in a few years effected the conversion of a whole people and its liberation from the atheistic Masonic domination, which persecuted the Church. The story is truly unique, and an example for our times as well.

But the full influence of Fatima is not limited simply to Portugal in the immediate post-war period. In 1925 and 1929, new apparitions which took place at Pontevedra and Tuy, in Spain, where Lucy was then a religious with the Dorothean Sisters, fulfilled the promises of the great Secret, and developed the prophetic message. Since this time, Sister Lucy through innumerable letters to her confessors, to various bishops and to the Popes, has continued to make known the desires of Heaven to the authorities of the Church.

In preparation for the fiftieth anniversary of the apparitions, (1917-1967), Bishop Venancio of Leiria decided to publish, at least in great part, these precious texts which until then were unknown to the public. In 1966 he commanded Father Alonso, a Spanish Claretian priest and renowned mariologist, to establish a critical edition. The result is a monumental work of fourteen volumes which, alas, has still not been published, and we shall see why. Fortunately, along with the great official critical study, whose publication was constantly postponed, this Fatima expert was able to make known the essential contents in numerous writings, until his untimely death on December 12, 1981. All his articles and pamphlets published from 1967 to 1981, written in Spanish and Portuguese, are an inexhaustible gold mine of first-hand information for us today. There were also two Portuguese experts, Father Martins dos Reis and Father A. M. Martins, who have published since 1973 numerous letters of Sister Lucy which until then had been unpublished.¹

Thus has the historical account of Fatima been enriched and renewed many times over since the labours of Father Barbas. It will be the aim of our second volume to make use of all these new documents, to place them in their historical context, and use them to better understand and explain the great Secret of

Fatima. The second volume, *The Secret and the Church*, will trace the developments and repercussions of the Message of Fatima from 1917 to 1942.

THE THIRD SECRET (1942-1983)

Finally, the famous Secret – which should have been divulged in 1960 and still has not been – will be the subject of the entire third volume. There especially, we have many new facts to bring to light. Using the works of Father Alonso, which shed a great deal of light on the history of the last part of the Secret, we shall be able, almost with certitude, to state its true content. Indeed, today we have such a reliable body of evidence on this text that it is now possible, by a strictly logical demonstration, to dispel the thick, mysterious clouds which some have tried at any price to preserve around this Secret for the last twenty years...

*

But if Our Lady of Fatima speaks to the Church and to the world, let us not forget that She speaks, first of all, to each one of us. This is why we have not confined ourselves to a simple historical examination of facts. For what good is it to read the warnings of Heaven, if not to apply it to our own lives? Thus the historical and critical exposition, although indispensable, is not enough.

Just as we have sought to set forth *The Whole Truth About Fatima*, we have also sought to make known and loved the great Message of Our Lady, so rich, so attractive, more urgent than ever in view of the terrible dangers, both spiritual and temporal, that threaten us today. For this we have generally let Sister Lucy speak for herself: faithful to her mission of «making the Immaculate Heart of Mary known and loved», in innumerable writings she has not ceased for over fifty years to comment on, explain and illustrate the marvellous words of the Queen of Heaven, with which her own soul is completely penetrated.

We took her for our guide, so to speak, certain in this way of grasping the essential part of this great Secret, so salutary for our souls, for our nations, and for the Church. It is a secret rich in meaning, which introduces us into the very mystery of the Heart of the Virgin Mary: She is the Immaculate Mediatrix, the Mother of Mercy, Through the mediation of Her maternal Heart God wills today, in His incomparable love of predilection for Her and in His mercy towards us, to

grant us every good thing: Heaven for our souls, peace for the world and the Church, and the conversion and return of all nations to Her bosom.

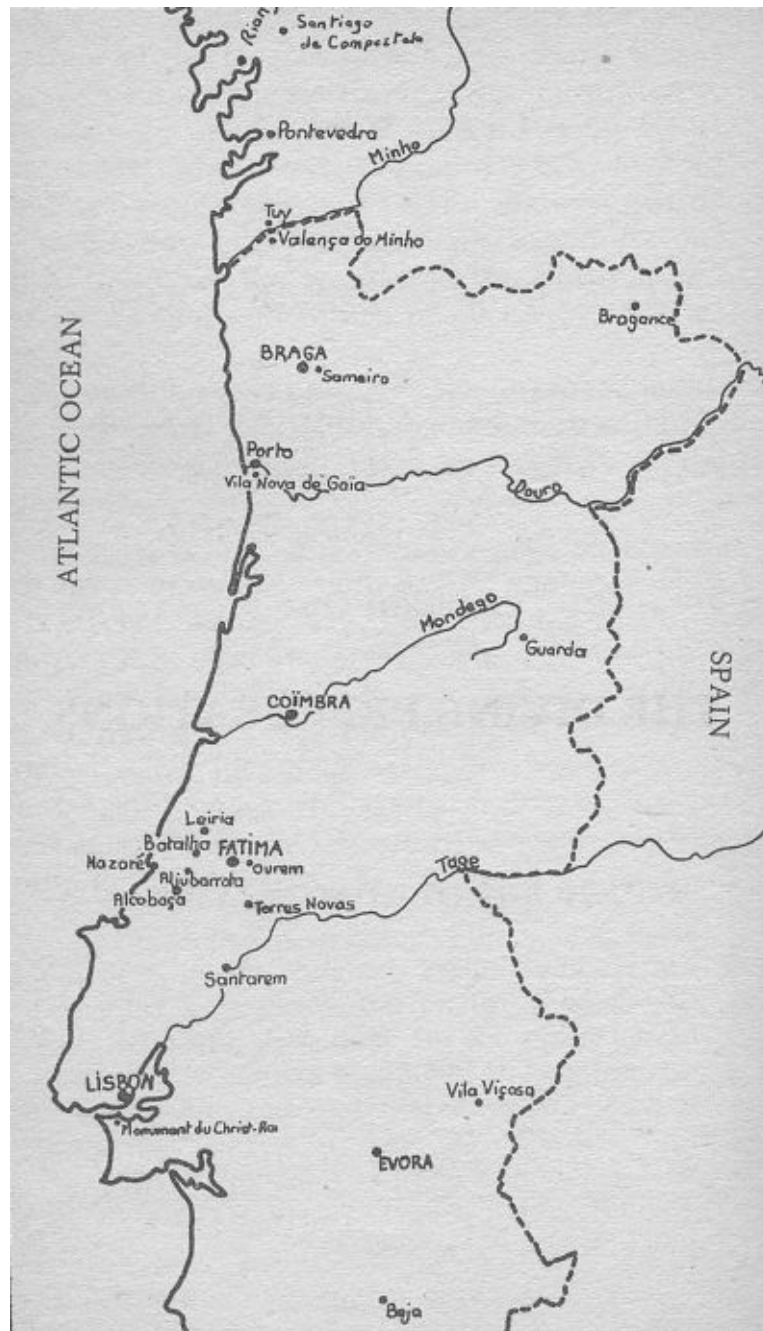
Certainly, these promises are unprecedented, but in the great tribulation to come they will help us preserve our faith, hope and charity to the very end.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE TO THE READER

With the kind permission of the author, Parts I and II in the original French edition are presented in reverse order for this English edition. This has been done by the publisher to facilitate the English reading of this monumental, important, and very interesting and edifying book.

PART ONE: THE FACTS

SECTION I: The divine preparations



CHAPTER I

PORTUGAL, “LAND OF HOLY MARY”

Jacinta, Lucy tells us in her Memoirs, loved to sing. During the long hours of solitude spent watching the sheep, the three shepherds of Aljustrel intoned, one by one, the traditional dancing tunes or the beautiful chants of the Church. One song was a favourite with them, the *Salve Nobre Padroeira*, which was very popular in Portugal. It sings of the protection of the Virgin Mary as the patroness of Her people of predilection, the little nation of Portugal.

«Hail, O noble Patron,
Of the people whom You protect,
Of the people chosen among all others,
As the people of the Lord!

O Thou, glory of our land,
Whom You have saved a thousand times!
As long as the Portuguese people exists
You will always be their love!»²

This song evokes a marvellous history, the history of a nation completely devoted to the Immaculate Virgin from its beginning, and which, in spite of conquest by foreigners and a more and more suffocating Masonic domination, has remained unshakably faithful to its Heavenly Patroness, until the eve of the great miracle of 1917.

If Our Lady is Queen of France, She is also in all truth the Queen of valiant Portugal, especially since 1646: eight years after the solemn consecration of France to Our Lady by the Holy King Louis XIII, Portugal in turn officially consecrated itself to the Immaculate Virgin by the mouth of John IV, restorer of national independence.

It is not by chance that the Blessed Virgin reserved for France Her great apparitions of the nineteenth century, rue du Bac, La Salette, Lourdes, Pontmain... Nor is it by chance that little Portugal was chosen for the most spectacular and most important of the Mariophanies. Born so to speak from France, the “little House of Portugal”, as Camoens liked to say, imitated France

all through the ages in its tender and faithful devotion to the Blessed Virgin. By an admirable grace of predilection, indissolubly linked with its national vocation, Portugal, like France, had long prepared to welcome the Queen of Heaven. Let us review the brightest episodes in this admirable alliance, forged so early on and never broken, which made this happy country, even before Our Lady of the Rosary came to Fatima, the “Land of Holy Mary”.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF THE KINGDOM OF MARY

A “DAUGHTER” OF FRANCE. The ancient Roman province of Lusitania was evangelized early on; in the sixth century, St. Martin of Duma was the apostle of its countryside. But in 711, the Moors invaded the country... And almost three centuries went by before the dawn of deliverance came. In 1086, Alfonso VI, King of Castile and Leon, called on the French for help, and these Crusades of the French would play an important role in this glorious “reconquista”: In 1095, Henry, son of the Duke of Burgundy, had delivered the whole northern part of the country, between Minho and Douro, from Moslem domination. He then received in marriage the hand of the daughter of the king of Castille, and possession of the whole region he had conquered along with the title of “Count of Portugal”. A nephew of the great St. Hugh, the powerful abbot of Cluny, Henry favoured the installation of several daughter-houses of the French abbey. The first Archbishop of Braga after the liberation was St. Gerard de Moissac, and his successor was Maurice Burdin. Both were Frenchmen and monks of Cluny.

Count Henry increased his domains at the expense of the Moors, but it was his son, Alfonso Henriques, who consolidated the independence of Portugal by his victory over the Moors at Ourica in 1139. «His soldiers, who were for the most part French crusaders, proclaimed him king right on the battlefield.»³ When his feudal lord, the King of Castille, protested against this usurpation, Henriques requested and obtained the protection of Pope Innocent II as his overlord. «Portugal was born», Barthas comments, «and it was born both French and Roman. The Portuguese people never forgot this twofold origin.»

UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY. Most important of all, the new “conquistador” king immediately chose the Mother of God as Patroness of his country and his new dynasty. «As founder of the kingdom», writes Father Oliveira Dias, «he placed it under the protection of Mary, taking Her as

Protectress and Mother of all the Portuguese, decreeing at the same time that an annual tribute should be paid to the Church of St. Mary of Clairveaux, in the name of its abbot, St. Bernard, and his successors. The document recording this vow, made with the consent of his vassals and signed at the Cathedral of Lamego on April 28, 1142, was found in the monastery of Alcobaça, written on parchment and stamped with the royal seal.»

After St. Hugh and his Cluniacs, St. Bernard and his disciples exercised an immense influence on the young kingdom, developing among the people a tender devotion to Our Lady. In 1142 King Alfonso Henriques gave St. Bernard the lands on which would be built, only a few miles from Fatima, the magnificent monastery of Alcobaça. «When he was planning the daring conquest of Santarem, at that time still in the hands of the Moors, the same king made a vow to erect a monastery dedicated to the Virgin, if he was victorious in battle. This is the monastery of Santa Maria de Alcobaça, which was given to the monks of St. Bernard.»⁴ Enlarged by the successors of Alfonso, it became the majestic royal monastery that we admire nowadays.

From then on, the epic struggles of the Cross versus the Crescent of Islam would take place under the protective standard of Santa Maria of Alcobaça. The crusaders would carry with them a statue of Our Lady which was venerated until the eighteenth century, in the church of Our Lady of the Martyrs, at Lisbon. «All the conquests of King Alfonso Henriques, who founded the nation, were undertaken and completed under the auspices of Mary», remarks Father Oliveira Dias.

FATIMA AND THE CRUSADES. Here let us point out, that if we can believe the words of an ancient ballad, Fatima owes its clearly Arabic name to an episode in the reconquest of Portugal which took place in this era. Fatima, the daughter of a powerful Moslem prince of Alcacer do Sal, was captured by a Crusader, Gonçalo Hermingues. When the Christian knight asked the king for her hand in marriage, she converted and was baptized under the name Oureana, from which the village of Ourem took its name. «But the beautiful princess died young, and Don Gonçalo, in his distress, gave his life to God in the Cistercian abbey of Alcobaça.» Not long after, the abbey founded a small priory in the neighbouring mountains; Brother Gonçalo was sent there and took with him the remains of his dear Fatima. The place took and kept her name.⁵

Around the same time was founded the sanctuary that would be so popular for

centuries, in honour of Our Lady of Nazare.

Let us recognize the fact: does any other nation exist whose very foundation is so closely linked with the cult and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary?

II. THE VOW TO OUR LADY AND THE TWO PEAK CENTURIES

THE VOW OF AUGUST 13, 1385 AND THE MIRACULOUS VICTORY. As a result of dynastic troubles, in 1383 Castille once again dominated Portugal. The prudent and pious Dom John, master of the military order of Avis, was then acclaimed by the people of Lisbon as «regent and defender of the kingdom». Taken by his peers to lead the national uprising and proclaimed king, he would become the liberator of his country and the founder of a prestigious dynasty, which would lead Portugal to greatness for two centuries (1385-1580). But once again this was thanks to a special and miraculous help from the Queen of Heaven, invoked with a tender fervour by the monarch and all his people.

The instrument of the miraculous rebirth was the Blessed Dom Nuno Alvares Pereira, a great devotee of Our Lady, «an image of both a hero and a saint, like Joan of Arc», venerated as the most popular figure of the Portuguese golden age.⁶ While John of Avis hesitated in front of the more numerous Castilian army, waiting for English reinforcements, Dom Nuno decided on August 7 to march alone into battle. The image of Our Lady was embroidered on his standard, and he gave his troops this war cry: «In the name of God and the Virgin Mary!»

On August 13, 1385, before meeting the most powerful armies of the King of Castille, he drew his troops to the plateau of Fatima where John of Avis finally rejoined him. There they solemnly invoked the protection of the Virgin Mary, and the king, kneeling before Her image, vowed that if victory was given them, he would build a beautiful monastery in Her honour, and make a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Oliveira. «This was the first “thirteenth” of the month celebrated in honour of Our Lady on this little corner of the earth chosen by Her», Barthas comments.

On the next day, August 14, Vigil of the Assumption, the great victory of Aljubarrota assured the independence of the country for two centuries, and consolidated the foundation of the new dynasty. For Portugal, this victory could be compared to the deliverance of Orleans by Joan of Arc. Pope Boniface IX, in

his bull of February 1391, did not hesitate to describe the victory as miraculous, given the crushing superiority of the Spanish forces.

The king kept his promise with great magnificence. Let us quote our Portuguese historian:

«The king went on foot (150 miles) with his knights to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Oliveira, while in the capital, continual ceremonies of thanksgiving were organized in honour of Our Lady. In fulfilment of his vow, the king hastened to construct the church and monastery of Batalha, a veritable poem written in stone, a magnificent jewel of various styles and an immortal monument of Portugal's gratitude to the Virgin Mary. He called it Our Lady of Victory.»⁷

From this Dominican monastery, devotion to the Holy Rosary was destined to spread all over the country. Is it not remarkable that the two monuments of national independence, both built for the glory of the Virgin Mary, were located only a few miles from Fatima?

It is worth adding that Blessed Nuno Pereira was Count of Ourem and feudal lord of the region of Fatima, which is still called “the land of the Holy Count”. «After successive victories, in which he drove the invaders from Portugal's frontiers, he made his profession as a Carmelite, taking the name of Brother Nuno of Holy Mary, out of devotion to the Virgin. In gratitude for all the victories She had given the Portuguese, he built in Her honour the great convent of the Carmelites at Lisbon, with a church containing six chapels, all dedicated to the Mother of God under different titles. And in the very enclosure of the convent, he built the hermitage of Our Lady of the Assumption, where he spent long hours in prayer.» He also built six other churches in honour of the Virgin, the most famous of which was Our Lady of the Conception at Vila Viçosa. On January 15, 1918, a few months after the apparitions of Fatima, Pope Benedict XV, giving him the title of Blessed, recognized and approved the traditional veneration that the dioceses of Portugal gave him.

One last coincidence, which Gerard de Sede did not fail to notice, and which amazes us: it was on May 13 that at the request of John I, Pope Boniface IX ordered all Cathedrals in Portugal to be dedicated to the Virgin Mary.⁸

To be sure, in 1917, at the height of the trials under the revolutionary and

Masonic persecutions, this episode, like all those we have just recalled, was undoubtedly forgotten by most. In any case, the little seers of Aljustrel and those around them knew nothing of them. But today, in hindsight, how can we not see in the apparitions of Fatima, the prolongation and miraculous crowning of this history, so full of the supernatural presence of Mary? Especially since the great requests of Our Lady aim above all, as we shall see, to revive this great tradition of a tender public and official devotion of a whole people, united behind its leaders, towards its Queen, its Protectress and Mediatrix of all spiritual and even temporal goods. And this time, not only for Portugal, but for the whole world, which is called to become the “Land of Holy Mary”.

TWO CENTURIES OF DEVOTION BY THE MONARCHY AND PEOPLE. Delivered from its invaders by a miracle of the Queen of Heaven, the “Land of Holy Mary” would reach a high point of two centuries under the leadership of prestigious monarchs (1385-1580). Crusades, great maritime discoveries, missionary work and formation of colonies, such would be the various aspects of an incomparable success, because it was at once Catholic, royal and communitarian, always under the special protection of Mary, the Heavenly *Padroeira*.

A few names suffice to recall this spectacular apogee, which begins with the “glorious generation”, as Camoens designates the descendants of John I. Right into the fourteenth century they kept alive the crusading ideal, always linked with a tender devotion to Mary. After the capture of Ceuta, in 1415, they multiplied their expeditions to try to reconquer the largest African towns on the shores of the Mediterranean. During the siege of Tangiers, in 1437, where Henry the Navigator would distinguish himself once again, his infant brother Fernando fell into the hands of the Moors. Taken as a hostage, he died like a saint in 1448 in a prison of Fez, after having found in his devotion to Our Lady the power to resign himself, and then the courage to die as a martyr of the Crusade. On all Saturdays and Vigils of Our Lady’s feasts, he fasted in Her honour.

His brother Henry the Navigator was no less devoted to Our Lady. Having conceived the ingenious plan of sailing around Africa to “surround” the Moslems,⁹ he charged his fleet with the discovery of the African perimeter. On the beach of Restelo (near Lisbon), where the majority of exploratory boats left, he built a chapel in honour of Our Lady. «Before the famous statue of Our Lady venerated there, Vasco de Gama, Pedro Alvares Cabral and many other daring navigators who brought the name of Mary along with that of Portugal even to the

furthest countries of the pagan world, prayed and assisted at Mass before going off to sea.»¹⁰

On May 20, 1498, Vasco de Gama embarked for the Indies. Once again, the hazardous adventure had been confided to Our Lady, and She brought it to a happy conclusion. The infant Manuel had made a vow that he fulfilled on the return of Vasco de Gama. To replace the little chapel built by Henry the navigator, in 1500 he began the construction of a church and monastery of hieronymites at Belem, at the gates of Lisbon, on the right bank of the Tagus. The sanctuary of Our Lady of Belem bears witness to the constant protection that the Virgin Mary granted so many heroic enterprises. For the discoverers and conquerors opened the door to an innumerable host of missionaries and martyrs.

We can scarcely imagine the great missionary zeal that animated Portugal at the dawn of the Counter Reform, under the leadership of the great king John III (1521-1557). Filled with enthusiasm by the letters of St. Francis Xavier, which were burning with zeal, hundreds of Jesuits, such as the Blessed Azevedo and his martyred companions, left the seminary of Coimbra to plant the Cross and preach Our Lady in the Indies and in Japan, Africa and Brazil.¹¹

Through her navigators, her conquerors and her missionaries, “the Land of Holy Mary” caused the Star of the Sea to be venerated in a great part of the world where she was as yet unknown.

III. THREE CENTURIES UNDER THE STANDARD OF THE IMMACULATE ONE

In 1580, with the death of the Cardinal-King, Portugal lost its national monarchy and fell once more under Spanish domination. This new decline would be the occasion for the solemn renewal of its ancient alliance with the Virgin Mary.

THE RESTORATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CONSECRATION TO MARY. «On a Saturday, December 1, 1640, Portugal awoke to a new life of independence, and proclaimed the duke of Braga king, under the name John IV.»¹² On December 8, in the royal chapel, both the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the restoration of the monarchy and national independence were celebrated at the same time. «Spain did not accept the fait accompli», our Portuguese historian continues, «and war broke out between the two countries; it

went on, with one battle after another, for twenty-eight years. The Portuguese saw in this continual series of victories a tangible protection of the Virgin, for a people completely disarmed against a powerful enemy, which militarily occupied the country. The Spanish were forced to recognize the king and the independence of Portugal.»

Here we must point out a moving parallel: in 1638, King Louis XIII had consecrated «his person, his State, his crown and his subjects to the most holy and glorious Virgin», chosen for the «special protection of his kingdom». This act resulted in a great wave of fervour in France, at the very moment when the closest bonds united her to Portugal, which Louis XIII and Richelieu, who were also at war with Spain, actively encouraged. John IV decided to follow the example of the king of France.¹³ On October 20, 1646, «as a sign of love and gratitude», he laid his royal crown at the feet of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. With his whole nation gathered together in the Cortes, he proclaimed Her the Patroness of his kingdom, «hoping with great confidence in the infinite mercy of Our Lord, who by the mediation of this Patroness and Protectress of our kingdom and our lands, of which we have the honour to call ourselves vassals and tributaries, shall protect and defend us against our enemies, while considerably increasing our lands, for the glory of Christ our God and the exaltation of the Holy Roman Catholic Faith, the conversion of pagans and the submission of heretics.»¹⁴

THE DONATION AND VOW TO THE IMMACULATE ONE. By this solemn act, Portugal, faithful to its own tradition, chose to consecrate itself to the Virgin Mary under the title of Her Immaculate Conception. Henceforth the pious monarch, followed by the enthusiasm of his whole people, never ceased to loudly proclaim his faith in the unique privilege of Mary, anticipating by two centuries the infallible definition of Pope Pius IX. «He bound himself by an oath, in which the prince and the Cortes joined him, swearing to propose and defend, even at the cost of his life, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, on condition of the Church's approval.»¹⁵

The formula of this vow is so admirable that we cannot fail to give part of it: «And if anyone dares to attempt anything against our promise, oath and vassalage, we will consider him from this moment as no longer belonging to the nation and we wish him to be driven from the kingdom; and if he is king (which may God avert), may the divine malediction and ours fall on him and may he no longer be counted among our descendants; we vow that he be cast out and

stripped of the throne by the same God who gave us the kingdom and raised us up to the royal dignity.»¹⁶

And to stress and perpetuate the national character of his vow, he ordered that an inscription should be engraved in marble or some other stone above the gates of towns, recalling this oath of the King and the Cortes in honour of the Mother of God, «preserved from original sin»¹⁷. «At Leiria», Canon Barthas notes, «one can still see this inscription on a building on Alcobaça Street.»¹⁸

Can it be said that we have gone into a useless digression, far from Fatima and its message? No, on the contrary we are at the very heart of the mystery, the most hidden part of the secret, of which we know only a fragment: «In Portugal the dogma of faith will always be preserved.» For if the text of the solemn vow always to defend the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was wiped off the gates of the towns by the liberal government of the nineteenth century or the sectarian freemasons of the revolution of 1910, the Virgin Mary did not forget it, and it is Her “most faithful nation” that She chose to manifest to the world the mercy of Her Immaculate Heart. To this nation it was promised, in the midst of the great trial to come, to preserve intact all the dogmas of the faith.

To perpetuate the memory of his vow, the king also ordered medals to be struck in gold and silver, bearing the image of the Immaculate Virgin, «Protectress of the Kingdom». «Finally, a royal decree ordered all municipalities, Cathedral chapters, and the whole clergy to take the Immaculate Virgin as their Patroness, according to the form in the brief of Pope Urban VIII governing the election of patron saints.»¹⁹ What other nation was better prepared to welcome the great message of the Immaculate Heart of Mary?

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS: OUR LADY OF SAMEIRO. In the eighteenth century, with the miserable Marquis of Pombal and his diabolical freemasonry, a dark night passed over the poor “Land of Holy Mary”. The good people, however, remained faithful to their Heavenly *Padroeira*. In their enthusiasm for the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, the faithful raised to the glory of their Immaculate Queen the superb national sanctuary of Sameiro, near Braga. The work was begun in 1863, and a magnificent statue of the Immaculate Virgin was sculpted at Rome and blessed by Pope Pius IX himself. Jacinta told Dr. Lisboa that this was the image which reminded her the most of Our Lady such as she had contemplated Her at Fatima.²⁰

THE PORTUGUESE, PILGRIMS AT LOURDES. Finally, the moving chapter where Canon Barthas describes the pilgrimages of the Portuguese people to Lourdes²¹ deserves to be read. Of the foreign pilgrims to come to Lourdes, the Portuguese were undoubtedly the first, the most numerous, and the most fervent to come in groups, accompanied by their priests, their bishops and archbishops. «In 1876, the patriarch of Lisbon went to the grotto», and he returned in 1887. During the pilgrimage of May 1878, two Portuguese people were miraculously cured. The following month King Fernando visited it with some members of his family. Soon the Portuguese were flocking to Lourdes in the thousands, and after the revolution of 1910, many exiles chose to live in the Marian town that was so dear to them. Pilgrimages continued to be organized in spite of the religious persecution raging in their country.²²

A BASTION OF CATHOLICISM. In this land of Portugal where Catholicism remained solidly implanted in the great majority of the population, but where liberal and masonic ideas had worked a good deal of harm, the region of Fatima remained one of the most faithful bastions of the ancient Catholic and royal traditions. According to Canon Galamba: «The district of Ourem (where Fatima is located), was well known for the generosity of its inhabitants, the number of priests, and the abundance of its vocations; it was considered one of the most precious jewels and one of the best supporting areas for any religious action; one could count on its priests and its faithful in any circumstances... In this troubled period (in 1911, after the law of separation of Church and State), they were never able, either voluntarily or by force, to make an inventory of the goods of the Church, and to my knowledge this was a unique case in all of Portugal. The clergy and the faithful made a formidable block.»²³

Yes, it was indeed in all truth that the three little shepherds could sing the beautiful traditional refrain, as they looked after their sheep:²⁴

«Hail, O noble Patron,
Of the people whom You protect,
Of the people chosen among all others,
As the people of the Lord!

O Thou, glory of our land,
Whom You have saved a thousand times!
As long as the Portuguese people exists
You will always be their love!»



The three shepherds photographed in front of the Marto house several days before October 13, 1917. This photo was published by Avelino de Almeida to illustrate his articles of the 15th and the 29th of October, 1917, in the daily newspaper *O Seculo* and in the magazine *Ilustração portuguesa*.

CHAPTER II

THREE CHILDREN OF CHRISTENDOM

Even before the account of the apparitions and stupendous miracles of 1917, the history of Fatima evokes our wonder first of all by the atmosphere of a living Christendom in which it suddenly plunges us. To deliver Her great message destined to enlighten our whole twentieth century, Our Lady did not choose to appear in an industrial city, already devoured by the leprosy of pauperism, laicism and paganism that were making inroads everywhere. No, She chose to manifest Herself in a poor village, with a long Christian history, lost in the great mountainous region of the Serra da Aire, about eighty miles north of Lisbon. There, in 1917, as in many countries of our Christian Europe, the morals, the piety and the virtues of old remained as though miraculously preserved. This choice is an initial revelation of the predilections of the Heart of Mary.

What is marvellous about Fatima is that, because these events are so close to our times, and immediately aroused such an immense interest, we know everything, even to the smallest details, about the lives and souls of the seers, about their families, and about their village, before, during, and after the apparitions.

«THE HISTORY OF FATIMA AS IT REALLY HAPPENED»

The history of Fatima was written long ago, and rewritten many times over.²⁵ Let it suffice for us to recall the works of Canon Barthas, especially his magnificent work, *It Was Three Small Children, or Fatima 1917-1968*, which remains an incomparable source of information.

The recent publication of the *Memoirs* of Sister Lucy in their integral and authentic version, in 1973, necessarily reduces the value of all the partial accounts, however good they might have been, that were done beforehand. From now on these texts necessarily become the primary and irreplaceable source of all histories of the apparitions, for an obvious reason: because they come from the hand of the seer, who applied herself with extreme care to «*relate the history of Fatima as it really happened*», striving only to write, so to speak, under the movement of grace:

«... I must thank God for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, which I can feel suggesting to me what I should say or write. If sometimes my own imagination or my own understanding suggest something to me, I sense immediately that it is lacking the divine unction, and I stop my work until I am sure, in the deepest recess of my soul, of what God wants me to say in His place.»²⁶

In fact, these texts drawn up by Lucy, always under strict obedience, in great haste and under heroic conditions – «in a remote corner of the attic, lit by a single skylight, my lap serving as a table and an old trunk as a chair...»²⁷ – these texts have a grace of their own about them, and themselves bear witness to this “inspiration”, this “divine unction” faithfully sought by the seer.

However these four Memoirs have a grave defect, at least for less informed readers: they do not present us with *a synthetic and chronological view of the events*. This is due only to the circumstances in which they were written: written up under obedience, in all haste, and without a plan embracing the whole, they all summarize, under different aspects and with a certain internal disorder, the history of Fatima. For Sister Lucy confesses as much and excuses herself for writing «in haste and according to what I could remember», and «without troubling myself about the order or style».²⁸ «I write here what I can remember», she says again, «just like a crab, which goes first backwards, then forward, without worrying where it is going...»²⁹

It remains for us then to make our choice from among all these marvellous texts; to order them, adding the minimum of necessary explanations, and in short, to highlight them as best as possible to allow the reader to appreciate their spontaneity and freshness right away. Adding some subtitles can also contribute something. But let us repeat that all these accounts taken in themselves are so perfect, so full of their own special flavour, that we cannot do any better than quote them literally. Any attempt at a paraphrase would lose something.³⁰

The work of Father de Marchi, *Testimonies on the Apparitions of Fatima*, can also serve as a source-book, which happily completes the Memoirs of Lucy. The author, who himself spent long hours at Fatima interviewing the witnesses of the events of 1917, quotes their fascinating accounts word for word. Moreover this account has the guarantee of Sister Lucy that she «read it attentively, and was able to point out the necessary corrections».³¹

Having mentioned then these few indispensable facts, we will strive to *let the witnesses speak for themselves*. This is the best way of «*relating the history of Fatima as it really happened*».

ALJUSTREL: A LIVING CHRISTENDOM

«Minutes from Fatima is a group of modest houses, perhaps twenty in all, lined along a narrow, rugged road, and separated by courtyards and gardens: this is the hamlet of Aljustrel.»³² There lived the two families of our seers, the dos Santos and the Marto families.

TWO EXEMPLARY FAMILIES

Antonio and Maria Rosa dos Santos had six children. In 1917, the eldest, Maria dos Anjos (26), was already married. Then came Teresa (24), Manuel (22), the only boy, Gloria (20) and Caroline (15). Lucy (10) was the youngest, born on March 22, 1907, and baptized on the 30th in the parish church of Fatima.

Jacinta and Francisco were her first cousins because their mother, Olimpia de Jesus,³³ was the sister of Antonio dos Santos. From a first marriage Olimpia had two sons, Antonio and Manuel. Her second marriage was to Manuel Pedro Marto, and the family grew with seven other children: José, Teresa, who died at the age of two, Florinda, a second Teresa, John, then Francisco, our seer who was born on June 11, 1908, and baptized on June 20. Finally came our little Jacinta, born on March 11, 1910, and baptized on March 19, Feast of St. Joseph, in the church at Fatima, in the same baptistery where Lucy and Francisco had been baptized.

THE MARTO FAMILY. The two families, who had lived in the village a long time, were also well esteemed there. At the time of the apparitions, Canon Formigao, who was then entrusted with the ecclesiastical inquiry, took the testimony of one of the distinguished members of the parish, Manuel Goncalves, an authorized witness on the families of the seers: «The parents of Francisco and Jacinta are excellent, profoundly Christian, respected and esteemed by all. The father has the reputation of being *the most serious man in the town*. He is incapable of deceiving anyone.»³⁴ Ti Manuel, as those who knew him called him, had never been to school, but he lacked neither experience nor personality.

He had fought in the war at Mozambique in 1895-1896. Father de Marchi, who interrogated him at length, allows us to see his soul as it was, simple and loyal, serious and wise, but humorous also. Endowed with a faithful and precise memory, an indefatigable narrator, his testimony is of capital importance for the historians of Fatima. This is all the more so since «his evaluations, which were in general very judicious, were full of good sense and the spirit of faith.»³⁵

«Mr. Marto», relates Father de Marchi, «was devoted to the truth. We must not “make up” things, and make them other than what they are, he would say to me frequently. When he would hear some chapter or passage from a book on Fatima being read, it was rare for him not to have a correction to add, or something to be made more precise. “That’s not exactly it!” he would exclaim. Then he would supply a mouthful of details...»³⁶

In short, he was a humble and limpid soul, extraordinarily endearing, as we will discover during this whole account. Along with Olimpia, an excellent Christian whose personality was perhaps a little more reserved, they were a very devoted couple. This was so much the case that once when Canon Barthas attempted to photograph her alone, Olimpia exclaimed, «do not cut me in two, wait for Manuel!»³⁷

THE DOS SANTOS FAMILY was less exemplary. Olimpia herself recalled that at the time of the apparitions, her brother was a heavy drinker. Although he was never an alcoholic, nevertheless around 1916-1917 he began to frequent the tavern, to the point where his neglect of the land brought hardship into the family. Manuel Goncalves said of him to Canon Formigao: «He rarely goes to Church, but he does not have any evil sentiments.»³⁸ For several years he had not made his Easter duty, but he still attended Mass. Since he did not get along with the parish priest, he went to Vila Nova de Ourem.

However, the education of his children never suffered on account of these deficiencies, because his wife, Maria Rosa, made up for it with uncommon virtue. She was a real homemaker. «Brought to sorrow, humiliated by the listlessness of her husband, she brought up her children with great firmness, which however did not take away the joy of their home.»³⁹ Because of her untiring devotion towards everybody, she enjoyed the esteem of all: «Generally», writes Lucy, «there would be several young girls in our house who would come to weave and to sew... They often said that the best days of their lives were the ones they had spent in our house.» It is a valuable testimony. Very

often also, the neighbours, during their work in the fields, would leave their children with Maria Rosa for her to take care of them. When a marriage feast would take place, she would be asked for her services as cook. Finally she often worked as a nurse, and with what charity!

«People would come to ask her advice on lesser symptoms, or they would ask her to come to the house if the sick person could not move. Thus she spent days and sometimes nights in the house of the sick person. If the illness was prolonged and the state of the sick person demanded it, she would send my sisters to spend some nights with them, so that the members of the family could get some rest.»⁴⁰

Moreover, the census of 1920 tells us that at Fatima, out of a total of 1179 women, only 91 knew how to write, and Maria Rosa was one of these.⁴¹ Conscious of this privilege, she made good use of it:

«On Sunday afternoon, all the young people would gather in our courtyard... They would spend the afternoon playing, and conversing with my sisters. At Easter-time they would pick the sugar-plums... My mother would spend these afternoons sitting at the kitchen door which looked out over the courtyard, *where she could see everything that was going on*. Sometimes, *she had a book in her hand and would be reading...* For me, she would say, there is nothing better than reading in my own house, in peace. Books bring us so many beautiful things! And the lives of the saints are so beautiful!

«On other occasions (Lucy continues), she would talk with some of my aunts, or the neighbours. *She always kept an air of seriousness*, and everybody knew that whatever she said was like a word of scripture, *and that we had to obey her without delay*. I never heard anyone dare to say a disrespectful or unfitting word in her presence. The people often would say that my mother was worth more than all her daughters.»⁴²

The truth is that Maria Rosa's daughters resembled her, and it is surely to her that Lucy owes her serious attitude and the natural authority she enjoyed over her companions, even at her young age.

LIFE AT ALJUSTREL

“BLESSED ARE THE POOR...” The two families, like the majority of the families of the parish which then numbered 2,500 souls, spread out over twenty similar hamlets, lived by cultivating their lands, and from their small flocks. Life was rugged and poor, because the rocky soil of the Serra was barely fertile, except in the shallow parts where the thicker humus would permit good harvests of wheat or maize. The vineyards and olive trees were a good supplement to the grain cultivation.

Although they were poor, neither the Martos nor the dos Santos were in want: «Although they had such a large family to raise, the Martos were proud that their children never had to go barefoot, as was often the case in Portugal until quite recently. They had a house, built for Olimpia’s first marriage, and everybody can still see it today, with the little bedrooms, so moving in their simplicity, where Francisco and Jacinta were confined to bed during their last illness.»⁴³

Likewise, one can still visit today the dos Santos house, relatively vast with its six rooms. In the courtyard, the numerous dependencies even bear witness to a certain comfort. The family also possessed some lands on the hill of the Cabeço and at the Cova da Iria. In short, at the price of constant labour on the part of everybody, – from the age of seven or eight the children were put in charge of tending the sheep⁴⁴ – the two families had enough to live on, and their lot was not comparable to the extreme indigence of the Soubirous parents.

“THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.” At Aljustrel they led the life of peasants, hard and simple, but also calm and joyous, completely impregnated with a solid piety and a profound faith, to a degree that we could hardly imagine today in our society, which is so secularized.

The heart of the Christian life was first and foremost the Sunday Mass. Let us listen to Olimpia, the mother of Francisco and Jacinta:

«May God keep us from letting a Sunday go by without Mass, either we or the children, as soon as they are old enough to understand! Even if we had to go to Boleiros, to Atouguia, or even to Santa Cararina (over six miles away), whether there is rain or thunder, *I can never remember having missed Mass*, even when I was nursing my children...»⁴⁵

And thus, this whole laborious and monotonous life was given rhythm and illumined by the sequence of the great feasts of the liturgical cycle. There was

also, each Sunday, the paternal authority of the parish priest which he exercised, without dispute, over each of his sheep. After the departure of good Father Pena, who was so beloved in the village, it was the young Father Ferreira who succeeded him in 1913. Although more rigid and less appreciated, he was not obeyed any less. For Maria Rosa, «the word of the parish priest was the word of God, and she observed rigorously, without any discussion, the commands which he laid down.»⁴⁶ Later on we will see that, because of her unlimited confidence in her parish priest, Maria Rosa doubted the genuineness of the apparitions for so long.

At Fatima, the devotions for the month of Mary, the month of the Rosary and the “month of the (poor) souls”, in honour of the departed, were all solemnly observed. At the call of the parish priest, the church was filled each night for the recitation of the Rosary.⁴⁷

We must listen to the whole, long testimony of Maria dos Anjos, the elder sister of Lucy, to discover with astonishment what an incomparable Christian education our three young seers enjoyed, for on this point the Marto parents were hardly inferior to Maria Rosa.

«It was our mother who taught us the catechism, and she would never let us go out and play before having learned our lesson by heart. I do not want to be ashamed, she would say, when Father will have my children recite their catechism. But she was not ashamed, because Father was always satisfied with us, and at the church he would even entrust us with other children to teach, although we were still children ourselves. I was thus no older than nine years old when I became a catechist.

«But our mother was not content with the recitation of formulas at the snap of a finger; she also wanted us to understand Christian doctrine, and she gave us detailed explanations. To know the catechism, and not to know the explanations makes no sense, she would say. We also asked her many questions, and she answered as well as the priest in church. Once I asked her how the fire of hell could not consume and destroy the damned, like the wood one puts in the fireplace. She answered, “Then you don’t know that if you put a bone in the fire, it will appear to burn without being consumed?” And we, very frightened, set ourselves to reflect on that point, and to take the resolution not to commit any sins, so as not to fall in this terrible fire.

«It was not only for us that our mother taught the catechism. Other children also came to the house to learn it, and not only from Aljustrel, but from Casa Velha, and even from Boleiros. Even distinguished persons came to her to have themselves instructed.

«During the month of May and the month of the dead, as well as during Lent, we would recite the Rosary every day before the fireplace, or in the common room. And when we would go out with the sheep, she would recommend that we always have the Rosary in our pockets. “Over there you will recite the Rosary in honour of Our Lady after you eat”, she would say, “and some Our Fathers in honour of Saint Anthony, so as not to lose the sheep”...»

«And we would always add some Our Fathers for the souls of our deceased relatives. In the morning before rising, and in the evening, before going to bed, after having recited the act of contrition and some Our Fathers, she would not let us forget our Guardian Angel...»

«She wanted us to be humble and industrious. And woe to us if anyone caught us in a lie! It was even one of the things she was the most severe on. The smallest fib would immediately result in a beating with her broom.

«She taught us devotion to the things of the Church, and especially to the Blessed Sacrament, right from the beginning.»⁴⁸

THE RELIGION OF FATIMA. High Mass on Sunday, the catechism learned by heart and explained to children, the practice of daily family prayer, devotions to the Blessed Sacrament and to Our Lady, the angels and saints, prayer for the dead, moral education on the virtues and vices, all this in the great light of the last ends, Judgement, Heaven and Hell, such was the religion which these poor people lived with humility, and heroism. This was what the clergy preached to them. Maria Rosa also read to her children the *Missão abreviada*, a manual of religion destined for the people of the country, to «prolong the fruit of the missions». There they taught a strict religion, but one of exact doctrine and solid devotion.⁴⁹ They went right to the essentials and all the principal truths of the faith were put in clear relief. It was clear and limpid.

What is striking is that Our Lady, when She came to the Cova da Iria, did not propose any other ideal. This is what Fatima is first of all: the most urgent

reminder ever that the true religion that pleases God and saves souls, is indeed this traditional religion, still faithfully lived in the beginning of the century in many regions, where Christendom remained very much alive. And when tomorrow, a new Christendom will rise up over the rubble, by the grace of Our Lady of Fatima and according to Her promise, the same dogmas, the same devotions, the same moral doctrine will still be its soul and very essence. Everything else is a deadly illusion.

Here moreover is the source of true peace and happiness. Our three seers who so perfectly came into their own in this atmosphere, prove it magnificently. As her Memoirs bear witness, Sister Lucy retains a fascinating memory of her childhood years, when the ruggedness of her life and the severity of her mother went together, in the most natural way, with her natural gaiety, her childish games, and the quasi-perpetual festive atmosphere that reigned in the village, as well as her first friendships and the first mystical graces she was favoured with. To her we must now turn. In hearing her we will be penetrated with the irresistible charm of this peaceful life in Christendom, and we will become acquainted with its three most beautiful fruits: the candid and serious, joyful and profound souls of our three little seers.

LUCY: THE HAPPY CHILDHOOD OF A PRIVILEGED SOUL

A PRECOCIOUS AND FAVOURED CHILD

In her second Memoir, which is an enthralling opening of an autobiography, Lucy writes:

«It seems to me that our dear God favoured me with the use of reason even when I was a very young child. *I can remember being conscious of my acts, even on the knees of my mother.* I can remember being put in the crib and put to sleep, to the sound of different songs. And since I was the youngest of five daughters and one son which Our Lord was pleased to give to my parents, I can remember various quarrels among them, because they all wanted to take me in their arms and talk to me. At that moment, so that no one would be victorious, my mother would take me back in her arms, and if she was occupied and could not keep me there, she would entrust me to my father, who in his turn would cover me with kisses and caresses.

The first thing I learned was the Hail Mary because my mother had the habit of taking me in her arms while she would teach my sister Caroline, who was five years older than I.»

Let us observe right away, since all the witnesses agree, that Lucy was an extraordinarily precocious child. She retains very precise memories of her very first years, which she artfully relates, showing a real literary talent. Listen to her relate, in such a lively and alert tone, how as a very young girl she took part in all the feasts of the village where she was cuddled by all:

«My two eldest sisters were already grown up. *My mother, knowing that I repeated everything I heard like a parrot, wanted them to take me with them everywhere they went.* They were, as we say in our locality, the leading lights among the young people. There was not a festival or a dance that they did not attend. At Carnival time, on St. John's Day, and at Christmas, there was certain to be a dance. Besides this, there was the vintage. Then there was the olive picking, with a dance almost every day. When the big parish festivals came round, such as the feasts of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of the Rosary, St. Anthony, and so on, we always raffled cakes; after that came a dance, without fail. We were invited to almost all the weddings for miles around, for if they did not invite my mother to be matron of honour, they were sure to need her for the cooking. At these weddings, the dance went on from after the banquet until well into the next morning. Since my sisters had to have me always with them, they took as much trouble in dressing me up as they were wont to do for themselves. As one of them was a dressmaker, I was always decked out in a regional costume more elegant than that of any girl around... You would have thought that they were dressing a doll rather than a small child.

«At the dances they deposited me on top of a wooden chest or some other tall piece of furniture, to save me from being trampled underfoot. Once on my perch, I had to sing a number of songs to the music of a guitar or the concertina. My sisters had already taught me to sing, as well as to dance a few waltzes when there was a partner missing. The latter I did with great agility, thus attracting the attention and applause of everyone present. Some of them even rewarded me with gifts, in the hope of pleasing my sisters.»⁵⁰

“THE WORLD BEGAN TO SMILE ON ME.” In these village balls, which retained a family atmosphere, there was doubtless nothing gravely reprehensible.

Neither the good Father Pena, nor the austere Maria Rosa, who very shrewdly always found a discreet means of watching over her daughters – «my mother, knowing that I repeated everything I heard like a parrot, wanted them to take me everywhere they went» – neither one found anything to object to.

Yet, Lucy will avow that even for her, still so young, this disordered passion for dancing was not without danger for her soul. «To tell the truth, the world was beginning to smile on me, and above all a passion for dancing was already sinking its roots deep into my poor heart.»⁵¹

Soon, fortunately, things would change in the village:

«Reverend Father Pena was no longer our parish priest, and had been replaced by Reverend Father Bocinha. When this zealous priest learned that such a pagan custom as endless dancing was only too common in the parish, he promptly began to preach against it from the pulpit in his Sunday sermons. In public and in private, he lost no opportunity of attacking this bad custom. *As soon as my mother heard the good priest speak in this fashion, she forbade my sisters to attend such amusements.*»

«From that time on, relates Maria dos Anjos, «cost what it might, our mother wanted us all at the house by sundown. Even on festival days, when we would have loved to amuse ourselves like the others, nothing doing! The supper hour was sacred.»⁵² «As my sisters' example led others also to refrain from attending», Lucy adds, «this custom gradually died out. The same thing happened among the children, who used to get up their little dances apart.»

Lucy concludes with this anecdote which reveals clearly the exemplary docility of her mother:

«Somebody remarked one day to my mother: “Up to now, it was no sin to go to dances, but just because we have a new parish priest, it is a sin. How can that be?” “I don’t know”, replied my mother. “*All I know is that the priest does not want dancing, so my daughters are not going to such gatherings any more.* At most, I would let them dance a bit within the family, because the priest says there is no harm in that.”»⁵³

EVENINGS IN THE DOS SANTOS FAMILY. Maria Rosa excelled in making

good Christian joy reign in family life. In the evening, she would have her children spend the time in music and singing, prayer and holy reading.

«At certain times of the year, my sisters had to go out working in the fields during the daytime, so they did their weaving and sewing at night. *Supper was followed with prayers led by my father*, and then the work began. Everyone had something to do: my sister Maria went to the loom; my father filled the spools; Teresa and Gloria went to their sewing; my mother took out her spinning; Caroline and I, after tidying up the kitchen, had to help with the sewing, taking out basting, sewing on buttons, and so forth; to keep drowsiness away, my brother played the concertina, and we joined in singing all kinds of songs. The neighbours often dropped in to keep us company, and although it meant losing their sleep, they used to tell us that the very sound of our gaiety banished all their worries and filled them with happiness. I heard different women sometimes say to my mother: “How fortunate you are! What lovely children God has given you!”

«When the time came round to harvest the corn, we removed the husks by moonlight. There was I sitting atop a heap of corn, and chosen to give a hug all round whenever a dark-coloured corn cob appeared.»⁵⁴

«My mother was accustomed to teaching catechism to her children during the summer at siesta time. In the winter, we had our lesson after supper at night, gathered round the fireside, as we sat roasting and eating chestnuts, and a sweet variety of acorns.»⁵⁵

«Every evening, especially in winter (recalls Maria dos Anjos), our mother would read to us something from the Old Testament or the Gospel, or the story of Our Lady of Nazare or Our Lady of Lourdes... During Lent, we knew that the readings would always be on the Passion of Our Lord. *Lucy immediately would retain everything by heart, and would then give her version to the children.*»⁵⁶

Let us note that Lucy already was demonstrating unusual qualities: attentive and reflective, with a profound piety, she was also very exuberant and overflowing with affection.

A LOVABLE AND AFFECTIONATE CHARACTER. The few photos that we have of her, taken at the time of the apparitions, are misleading. They show us a

face that is somewhat scowling and not very attractive. Of course, being a strong, robust little peasant, she did not have very delicate traits. But her big, black eyes, shining under the thick eyebrows, often lit up in a radiant smile which would transfigure her face. If the photos did not show it, numerous witnesses assure us, that Lucy was a very attractive and affectionate child. Let us hear her elder sister, Maria dos Anjos:

«We loved her *because she was so intelligent and affectionate*. Even when she was older, when she came home with the flock, she used to run and sit on her mother's lap and be cuddled and kissed. We, the elder ones, used to tease her and say: "Here comes the cuddler!" – and we would even get cross with her. But she always did it again the next day.»⁵⁷

"THE DEVIL WOULD HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT MY RUIN." Her uncle, Ti Marto, had well understood the richness of her character: «She was *very outgoing, very frank and very refined, very affectionate*, even with her father. Already I predicted her future: "You will be either very good, or very bad..."»⁵⁸

Such a temperament, and so many signs of tenderness and favour lavished on the young child could undoubtedly, in the long run, have harmed her soul:

«Amid the warmth of such affectionate and tender caresses, I happily spent my first six years. To tell the truth, the world was beginning to smile on me, and above all, a passion for dancing was already sinking its roots deep into my poor heart. And I must confess that the devil would have used this to bring about my ruin, had not the good Lord shown His special mercy towards me.»⁵⁹

But thanks to the indefatigable zeal of her mother who had already succeeded in teaching her the whole catechism when she was not even six years old, the beautiful truths of the Faith, the Love of Jesus, the ardent hope of receiving Him soon struck roots in her heart that were much more profound than the first attractions of the world. The altogether gratuitous predilection of the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary would do the rest.

THE SMILE OF OUR LADY AND HER FIRST COMMUNION AT AGE SIX

At a time when, in spite of the recent decrees of St. Pius X, pastors were so strict

about the age for first communion, Lucy obtained the signal favour of being able to make her first communion at the age of six.⁶⁰

We must read attentively the admirable account where Sister Lucy relates for us, so ingenuously and with such charming candour, this first mystical grace which marked her whole life so profoundly: «I do not know», she writes at the end of the narration, «whether the facts I have related above about my First Communion were a reality or a little child's illusion.» We must admire in this passage the prudent modesty of the seer who does not wish to give this intimate and personal grace, received at the age of six, the same degree of certitude as the great apparitions of 1916 and 1917. «What I do know», she goes on, «is that they have always had, and still have today, *a great influence in uniting me to God.*»⁶¹

These few pages, which for us are reminiscent of some similar texts of St. Therese of the Child Jesus or of Marie Noel, are one of the high points of the Memoirs, and to read them, one does not know what to marvel at more: the smile of Our Lady to her predestined child, or the resplendent beauty of our Church at that time, shining with a marvellous brightness even in the tiniest hamlets of Christendom. What fervour in those souls! What a spirit of faith penetrating the liturgy and family customs, what divine wisdom in the arrangements, what overflowing supernatural joy! And all this in a charming simplicity and perfectly natural atmosphere.

LUCY'S DISAPPOINTMENT. «The day which the parish priest had appointed for the solemn First Communion of the children of the parish⁶² was drawing near. In view of the fact that I knew my catechism and was already six years old, my mother thought that perhaps I could now make my First Communion. To this end she sent me with my sister Caroline to the catechism instructions which the parish priest was giving to the children, in preparation for this great day. I went, therefore, radiant with joy, hoping soon to be able to receive my God for the first time. The priest gave his instructions, seated in a chair up on a platform. *He called me to his side, and when one or another of the children was unable to answer his question, he told me to give the answer instead, just to shame them.*

«The eve of the great day arrived, and the priest sent word that all the children were to go to the church in the forenoon, so that he could make the final decision as to which ones were to make their First Communion. What was not my disappointment when he called me up beside him, caressed me

and then said I was to wait till I was seven years old! I began to cry at once, and just as I would have done with my own mother, I laid my head on his knees and sobbed.»

THE INTERVENTION OF GOOD FATHER CRUZ. «It happened that another priest who had been called in to help with the confessions, entered the church just at that moment. Seeing me in this position, he asked me the reason for my tears. On being informed, he took me to the sacristy and examined me on the catechism and the mystery of the Eucharist. After this, he took me by the hand and brought me to the parish priest, saying, “Father Pena, you can let this child go to Communion. *She understands what she’s doing better than many of the others.*” “But she’s only six years old”, objected the good priest. “Never mind! I’ll take the responsibility for that.” “All right, then”, the good priest said to me. “Go and tell your mother that you are making your first Communion tomorrow.”»

It is not without importance that Lucy had this rare privilege from a priest who undoubtedly will one day be raised to the altar and who was an expert on the knowledge of souls. We are speaking of the good Father Cruz who, in 1947, confirmed to Canon Barthas the exactness of all the facts reported by Sister Lucy in her Memoirs.⁶³ Now Father Cruz was known as a saint in all of Portugal, where he was going all over preaching from parish to parish. Having become a Jesuit, he died at Lisbon on October 1, 1948, and the renown of his sanctity was so great that the process for his beatification was opened in the spring of 1951.

In 1917, he was one of the first priests to openly come out in favour of the apparitions. He came back several times to Aljustrel to counsel and encourage the three seers, whom he loved as a father. But now let us return to Lucy’s narrative:

«I could never express the joy I felt. Off I went, clapping my hands with delight, and running all the way home to give the good news to my mother. She at once set about preparing me for the confession I was to make that afternoon.»

THE PUBLIC CONFESSION. «My mother took me to the church, and when we arrived, I told her that I wanted to confess to the other priest. So we went to the sacristy, where he was sitting on a chair hearing confessions. My mother knelt down in front of the high altar near the sacristy door,

together with the other mothers who were waiting for their children to confess in turn. Right there before the Blessed Sacrament, my mother gave me her last recommendations.

«When my turn came round, I went and knelt at the feet of our dear Lord, represented there in the person of His minister, imploring forgiveness for my sins. When I had finished, I noticed that everyone was laughing. My mother called me to her and said: “My child, don’t you know that confession is a secret matter and that it is made in a low voice? Everybody heard you! There was only one thing nobody heard: that is what you said at the end.” On the way home, my mother made several attempts to discover what she called the secret of my confession. But she obtained nothing but a stony silence.

THE WORDS OF A SAINT. «I am now going to disclose this secret of my first confession. After listening to me, the good priest said these few words: *“My child, your soul is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Keep it always pure so that He will be able to carry on His Divine action within it.”* On hearing these words, I felt myself filled with respect for myself, and asked the kind confessor what I ought to do. *“Kneel down there before Our Lady and ask Her, with great confidence, to take care of your heart, to prepare it to receive Her beloved Son worthily tomorrow, and to keep it for Him alone?”*»

THE SMILE OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY. «In the church there was more than one statue of Our Lady, but as my sisters took care of the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary, I usually went there to pray. That is why I went there on this occasion also, to ask Her with all the ardour of my soul, to keep my poor heart for God alone.

«As I repeated this humble prayer over and over again, with my eyes fixed on the statue, *it seemed to me that She smiled, and with a loving look and kindly gesture, assured me that She would.* My heart was overflowing with joy, and I could scarcely utter a single word.»

THE FERVENT WAIT. «My sisters stayed up that night making me a white dress and a wreath of flowers. As for me, I was so happy that I could not sleep, as it seemed as if the hours would never pass! I kept on getting up to ask them if the day had come, or if they wanted me to try on my dress, or

my wreath, and so forth.

«The happy day dawned at last; but nine o'clock – how long it was in coming! I put on my white dress, and then my sister Maria took me into the kitchen *to ask pardon of my parents, to kiss their hands, and ask their blessing*. After this little ceremony, my mother gave me her last recommendations. She told me what she wanted me to ask Our Lord when I had received Him into my heart, and said goodbye to me in these words: “*Above all, ask Him to make you a saint!*”

«Her words made such an indelible impression on my heart, that they were the very first that I said to Our Lord when I received Him. Even today, I seem to hear the echo of my mother's voice repeating these words to me. I set out for the church with my sisters, and my brother carried me all the way in his arms, so that not a speck of dust from the road would touch me. *As soon as I arrived at the church, I ran to kneel before the altar of Our Lady to renew my petition. There I remained in contemplation of our Lady's smile of the previous day*, until my sisters came in search of me and took me to my appointed place. There was a large number of children, arranged in four lines – two of boys and two of girls – from the back of the church right up to the altar rails. Being the smallest, it happened that I was the one nearest to the “angels” on the step by the altar rails.»

THE SACRED MOMENT. «Once the High Mass began and the great moment drew near, my heart beat faster and faster, in expectation of the visit of the great God who was about to descend from Heaven, to unite Himself to my poor soul. The parish priest came down and passed among the rows of children, distributing the Bread of Angels. I had the good fortune to be the first one to receive. As the priest was coming down the altar steps, I felt as though my heart would leap from my breast. But he had no sooner placed the Divine Host on my tongue than I felt an unalterable serenity and peace. I felt myself bathed in such a supernatural atmosphere that the presence of Our Dear Lord became as clearly perceptible to me as if I had seen and heard Him with my bodily senses. I then addressed my prayer to Him: “*O Lord, make me a saint. Keep my heart always pure, for You alone.*” Then it seemed that in the depths of my heart, Our Dear Lord distinctly spoke these words to me: “*The grace granted to you this day will remain living in your soul, producing fruits of eternal life.*”

«I felt as though transformed in God. It was almost one o'clock before the ceremonies were over, on account of the late arrival of priests coming from a distance, the sermon and the renewal of baptismal promises. My mother came looking for me, quite distressed, thinking I might faint from weakness. But I, filled to overflowing with the Bread of Angels, found it impossible to taste any food whatsoever. After this, I lost the taste and attraction for the things of the world, and only felt at home in some solitary place where, all alone, I could recall the delights of my First Communion.»⁶⁴

«THE CHILDREN ADORED HER»

«I was rarely able to obtain this solitude», Lucy continues. In fact very often she had to take care of the children of the neighbourhood. As Maria dos Anjos tells us:

«She knew how to look after children and the mothers used to leave them in our house when they went out to work. When I was at my weaving and my sister Caroline at her dressmaking, we used to keep an eye on them, but when Lucy was there, even when she was quite tiny, we didn't have to bother.

«She loved children and they adored her. Sometimes they would collect in our yard, a dozen or so, and she would be quite happy decorating the little ones with flowers and leaves. She would make little processions with saints, arranging flowers and thrones and singing hymns to Our Lady as if she were in church. I can still remember the one she liked best:

«To Heaven, to Heaven, to Heaven,
There shall I see my Mother again,
O pure Virgin, Thy tenderness
Comes to soothe my pain;
Day and night shall I sing
Of the beauty of Mary!»⁶⁵

This hymn is a Portuguese adaptation of the French, “I shall go to see Her one day”, which made St. Bernadette weep with emotion. When she would sing it, even from before the time of the apparitions, Lucy could not forget the smile of

Our Lady.

FRANCISCO AND JACINTA: TWO EXQUISITE SOULS

JACINTA: A PURE AND ARDENT HEART

Here is how Canon Formigao introduces her:

«She is called Jacinta of Jesus... Fairly large for her age, a little slender without being scrawny, with a well proportioned face, dark hair, modestly dressed, with a skirt reaching down to the ankles. Her appearance is that of a child in good health, perfectly normal, both physically and morally. Startled at the presence of strangers, she answers only in monosyllables and in a barely perceptible tone of voice.»⁶⁶

“SHE WAS ALWAYS SO GENTLE.” «Jacinta had a good heart, and God endowed her with a sweet and gentle character which made her both lovable and attractive.»⁶⁷ She was noticeably the favourite of her father, who declared to Father de Marchi: «She was always so gentle! In this respect, she was really remarkable. From the time her mother nursed her she was always like that. She never got angry at anything. We never raised another child like that! It was a natural gift with her.»⁶⁸

That did not prevent her, as she got bigger, from sometimes becoming capricious and moody at play, because she was lively and passionate in everything:

«The slightest quarrel which arose among the children when at play was enough to send her pouting into a corner... Even the coaxing and caressing that children know so well how to give on such occasions, were still not enough to bring her back to play; she herself had to be allowed to choose the game, and her partner as well.»⁶⁹

This however was merely the reverse side of a rich and enthusiastic temperament. Like her cousin she was very exuberant from the very beginning, and a marvellous dancer. In the prison of Vila Nova de Ourem, a tune from the waltz sufficed to make her forget her tears. Above all she had a heart of gold, capable of immense affection. She also had an astonishingly pure heart, completely docile to the baptismal grace, which already guided her thoughts and

her little childish actions. Here are some striking examples.

THE THREE KISSES FOR JESUS. The three friends often played the game of “forfeits” together. The rule of the game is that the loser has to do whatever the winner tells him. As Lucy relates:

«One day we were playing forfeits at my home, and I won, so this time it was I who told her what to do. My brother was sitting at a table, writing. I told her to give him a hug and a kiss, but she protested: “That, no! Tell me to do some other thing. Why don’t you tell me to go and kiss Our Lord over there?” There was a crucifix hanging on the wall. “All right”, I answered, “get up on a chair, bring the crucifix over here, kneel down and give Him three hugs and three kisses: one for Francisco, one for me, and the other for yourself.” “To Our Lord, yes, I’ll give as many as you like”, and she ran to get the crucifix. She kissed it and hugged it with such devotion that I have never forgotten it.»⁷⁰

A remarkable action which in fact bears witness both to the crystalline purity of her soul, and her tender love for Jesus, stupefying in a child of that age.

“OUR POOR DEAR LORD”. The end of the story is no less touching:

«Looking attentively at the figure of Our Lord, she asked: “Why is Our Lord nailed to a cross like that?” “Because He died for us.” “Tell me how it happened”, she said.» Lucy goes on ingenuously: «Since it was sufficient for me to hear stories once to be able to repeat them in all their details, I began to relate to my companions in detail the story of Our Lord... In hearing of His sufferings, the little girl was moved and began to cry. Many times later on she would come and ask me to tell the story again. She would weep and grieve, saying, “Our poor dear Lord! I’ll never sin again! I don’t want Our Lord to suffer more!”»⁷¹

This reflection of the child already shows us what a loving, sensible and resolute heart she had...

FRANK AS GOLD. The same story shows her to be frank and loyal, preferring to accuse herself rather than see her cousin unjustly scolded. Lucy continues:

«Just then my sister passed by, and noticed that we had the crucifix in our hands. She took it from us and scolded us, saying that she did not want us to

touch such holy things. Jacinta got up and approached my sister, saying: “Maria, don’t scold her! I did it. But I won’t do it again.” My sister caressed her, and told us to go and play outside, because we left nothing in its proper place.»

The love of truth was so profoundly anchored in her soul that the least little lie scandalized her. Nor was she shy about reproaching whoever had fibbed, even if it was her mother:

«When her mother would not tell the truth», relates Mr. Marto, «when she would say, for example, that she was going to the garden to look for some cabbage, when in fact she was going further, Jacinta would confront her with it on her return: “So then, mother, you lied to me? You told me you were going here, when instead you went there!... It is not nice to lie!” “As for myself”, added Mr. Marto, “I never deceived them in this way.”»⁷²

“I DID NOT SEE HIM.” Another story which Lucy relates, shows us how seriously, and how realistically little Jacinta considered the things of faith. For the feast of Corpus Christi Lucy’s sister Caroline would be in charge of dressing up some “little angels” who would throw flowers before the Blessed Sacrament during the procession. Lucy was always chosen and her cousin asked to be allowed to join her:

«The two of us went along to make our request. My sister said she could go, and tried a dress on Jacinta. At the rehearsals, she explained how we were to strew the flowers before the Child Jesus. “*Will we see Him?*”, asked Jacinta. “Yes”, replied my sister, “*the parish priest will be carrying Him.*”

«*Jacinta jumped for joy*, and kept on asking how much longer we had to wait for the feast. The longed-for day arrived at last, and Jacinta was beside herself with excitement. The two of us took our places near the altar. Later, in the procession, we walked beside the canopy, each of us with a basket of flowers. Wherever my sister had told me to strew the flowers, I strewed mine before Jesus, but in spite of all the signs I made to Jacinta, I couldn’t get her to strew a single one. *She kept her eyes fixed on the priest, and that was all.* When the ceremony was over, my sister took us outside the church and asked: “Jacinta, why didn’t you strew your flowers before Jesus?” “*Because I didn’t see Him.*”

«Jacinta then asked me: “But did you see the Child Jesus?” “Of course not. Don’t you know that the Child Jesus in the Host can’t be seen? He’s hidden! He’s the one we receive in Holy Communion!” “And you, when you go to Communion, do you talk to Him?” “Yes, I do.” “Then why don’t you see Him?” “Because He’s hidden.” “I’m going to ask my mother to let me go to Communion too.” “The parish priest won’t let you go until you’re ten years old.” “But you’re not ten yet, and you go to Communion!” “Because I knew the whole catechism, and you don’t.”

«After this, Jacinta and Francisco asked me to teach them the catechism. So I became their catechist, and they learned with exceptional enthusiasm.»⁷³

This charming anecdote shows that our little peasant could not be made to believe any old thing. «She has her wits about her and she calls a spade a spade», comments Dom Jean-Nesmy. «She is told she must see Jesus, and she looks around all over and says *she has not seen Him*. When later on she will insist, in spite of everybody, that *she saw a beautiful lady*, it is because she did in fact see Her, with her own eyes!»⁷⁴ Like it or not for Father Dhanis [regarding Father Dhanis, see Part II of this book], Our Lady chose Her witnesses well.

FRANCISCO: A CALM AND TENDER SOUL

«... Francisco arrives. He is already a little man, with a woollen cap upon his head, a very short vest, a waistcoat revealing his shirt underneath, and his breeches. What a fine face the child has! He has a lively glance and a mischievous look. He answers my questions with an air of detachment.»⁷⁵

A PEACE-LOVING CHILD. Let Sister Lucy herself describe the character of her cousin:

«Apart from his features and his practice of virtue, Francisco did not seem at all to be Jacinta’s brother. Unlike her, he was neither capricious nor vivacious. On the contrary, he was quiet and submissive by nature...

«In our games he was quite lively, but few of us liked to play with him as he nearly always lost. And if he won, and somebody tried to deny him his rights as the winner, he yielded without more ado and merely said: “You think you won? That’s all right! I don’t mind!”

«I must confess that I myself did not always feel too kindly disposed towards him, as his naturally calm temperament exasperated my own excessive vivacity. Sometimes, I caught him by the arm, made him sit down on the ground or on a stone, and told him to keep still; he obeyed me as if I had real authority over him. Afterwards, I felt sorry, and went and took him by the hand, and he would come along with me as good-humouredly as though nothing had happened.»⁷⁶

Like his father, he was gentle, humble and patient. Always having a joyful countenance, he was invariably polite and accommodating to all, even at the cost of considerable sacrifices:

«If one of the other children insisted on taking away something belonging to him, he said: “Let them have it! What do I care?”

«I recall how one day, he came to my house and was delighted to show me a handkerchief with a picture of Our Lady of Nazare on it, which someone had brought him from the seaside. All the children gathered round him to admire it. The handkerchief was passed from hand to hand, and in a few minutes it disappeared. A little later, I found it myself in another small boy’s pocket. I wanted to take it away from him, but he insisted that it was his own, and that someone had brought him one from the beach as well. To put an end to the quarrel, Francisco went up to him and said: “*Let him have it! What does a handkerchief matter to me?*”»⁷⁷

A ROBUST AND LIVELY BOY. This does not mean, however, that he was listless or weak-willed. If Francisco was docile to Lucy, it does not mean that his virtue was without failings. Here we must take into account the testimony of his father, which completes that of Sister Lucy.

A robust boy in good health, «he was more troublesome and more restless than his little sister. He was not as patient, and for some little thing would run around like a young bull calf.»⁷⁸ He could be mischievous, and without the firm hand of Manuel Pedro who knew how to make them obey, he too could have become capricious: «When I saw things weren’t going well I didn’t let them get too far! And when the two were quarrelling and I couldn’t tell where the right lay I gave them both a box on the ear for their pains. To put sense into them I had to be a bit strict.»⁷⁹ But Manuel Pedro had great authority and usually the threat was sufficient:

«Once Francisco refused to say his prayers and hid in the out-kitchen. I went to him and when he saw me coming he cried out at once that he would pray! That was before Our Lady appeared. After that he never failed to say them. In fact he and Jacinta would almost force us to say the Rosary.

«This and the chip of wood which he wanted to put in his brother's mouth (while he was sleeping) were the two worst things I ever saw him do.»⁸⁰

Mr. Marto could say later on: «even after the apparitions, I always found that my children were almost no different than the others.» We cannot but admire the purity and extraordinary candour of their souls, and without doubt their father meant especially that they had absolutely no air of affectation.

One little incident, reported this time by his mother Olimpia, reveals Francisco's delicate soul even from before the apparitions, as well as his vivacity:

«One day as he was going out with the sheep, I told him to take them to Teresa's ground which isn't here but near the village. And he said at once: "No, I don't want to do that!" I was just going to give him a slap when he turned to me and said very seriously: "Mother, are you teaching me to steal?..." I felt mad with anger and took him by the arm and pushed him outside. But he didn't go to Oiteiro! Not till the next day, after asking permission from his godmother, who said that he and Lucy might always go there.

«He was a clever little boy and it always surprised me how well he did the little jobs I always set him.»⁸¹

Although he was usually calm and peaceful, this was surely not out of indolence or apathy. Far from being a coward, he was on the contrary hardy and courageous.

«He was anything but fearful. He'd go anywhere in the dark alone at night, without the slightest hesitation. He played with lizards, and when he came across any snakes he got them to entwine themselves around a stick, and even poured sheep's milk into the holes in the rocks for them to drink. He went hunting for foxes' holes and rabbits' burrows, for genets, and other creatures of the wilds.»⁸²

HIS PASSION: MUSIC AND SONG. Like his father, who when he was alone always seemed absorbed in profound reflections, Francisco was a meditative soul. He had little taste for noisy games and the shouts of his two companions:

«He showed no love for dancing, as Jacinta did; he much preferred playing the flute while the others danced.⁸³ What Francisco enjoyed most, when we were out on the mountains together, was to perch on top of the highest rock, and sing or play his flute. If his little sister came down to run races with me, he stayed up there entertaining himself with his music and song.»⁸⁴

HIS GREATEST SIN. Along with the love of nature and the animals of the field, music was his dominating passion. The word is not excessive, for it caused him to commit the gravest fault of his short life: stealing a tostao (a very small coin!) from his father to buy a music-box that he coveted. We know this because of a moving account in the Memoirs. In 1919, shortly before dying at the age of eleven, he was feeling very bad one morning, and he called Lucy. It is she who relates the story:

«I dressed as fast as I could and went over there. He asked his mother and brother and sisters to leave the room, saying that he wanted to tell me a secret. They went out, and he said to me: “I am going to confession so that I can receive Holy Communion, and then die. I want you to tell me if you have seen me commit any sin, and then go and ask Jacinta if she has seen me commit any.” “You disobeyed your mother a few times”, I answered, “when she told you to stay at home, and you ran off to be with me or to go and hide.” “That’s true. I remember that. Now go and ask Jacinta if she remembers anything else.”

«I went, and Jacinta thought for a while, then answered: “Well, tell him that, before Our Lady appeared to us, *he stole a coin from our father to buy a music box from Jose Marto of Casa Velha*, and when the boys from Aljustrel threw stones at those from Boleiros, he threw some too!”

«When I gave him this message from his sister, he answered: “I’ve already confessed those, but I’ll do so again. Maybe, it is because of these sins that I committed that Our Lord is so sad! But even if I don’t die, I’ll never commit them again. I’m heartily sorry for them now.”»⁸⁵

A SUPERNATURAL FRIENDSHIP

After having introduced all three, it remains for us to say how our three shepherds found themselves together to receive the heavenly apparitions with which they would be privileged so soon.

Without a doubt this point seemed important to Sister Lucy, because she underlines it in her Memoirs: the formation of the trio was not her own doing:

«Before the happenings of 1917 (she writes), apart from the ties of relationship that united us, no other particular affection led me to prefer the companionship of Jacinta and Francisco to that of any other child. On the contrary, I sometimes found Jacinta's company quite disagreeable, on account of her oversensitive temperament.»⁸⁶ In another place she writes, «The affection which bound me to Francisco was just one of kinship, and that which had its origin in the graces which Heaven deigned to grant us... I myself did not always feel too kindly disposed towards him...»⁸⁷

It was only the immense admiration and lively attraction of Jacinta to her older cousin which would soon form the inseparable trio of the three seers. Lucy explains for us: «I don't know why, but Jacinta and her brother Francisco had a special liking for me, and almost always came in search of me when they wanted to play. *They did not enjoy the company of the other children...*»⁸⁸

A little anecdote which Lucy relates shows us what is already the *supernatural* character of Jacinta's attraction to her cousin. Lucy, as we have said, was often put in charge of looking after the neighbourhood children.

«One day, one of these little children accused another of improper talk. My mother reproved him very severely, pointing out that one does not say such nasty things, because they are sinful and displease the Child Jesus; and that those who commit such sins and don't confess them, go to hell. The very next time the children came, she said: "Will your mother let you come today?" "No." "Then I'm going with Francisco over to our yard." "And why won't you stay here?" "My mother doesn't want us to stay when those other children are here. She told us to go and play in our own yard. *She doesn't want me to learn these nasty things, which are sins and which the Child Jesus doesn't like.*»⁸⁹

With Lucy, and only with Lucy, the pure and ardent soul of Jacinta was fully at ease, as if Lucy had been given to her by a supernatural disposition. Jacinta tried to remain in her company as often as possible. This was surely a providential friendship. For if Lucy had not become, as she herself says, «the most intimate friend and confidante» of Jacinta, we would never have known the marvels of grace which God worked in this exquisite soul, this «lily of candour», this «seraphim of love», to use Lucy's own expressions.⁹⁰

A HARD SEPARATION. In 1915, Lucy recalls, «my sister Caroline was then thirteen, and it was time for her to go out to work. My mother, therefore, put me in charge of our flock. I passed on the news to my two companions, and told them I would not be playing with them anymore, but they could not bring themselves to accept such a separation.»⁹¹ As their mother refused them permission to accompany their cousin, each evening they went to wait for her return from the pasture. But, Lucy adds, «while Jacinta would run to meet me as soon as she heard the tinkling of the sheep bells, Francisco waited for me, sitting on the stone steps leading to our front door... He came to wait for me, but this was not out of affection for me, it was to please his sister.»⁹²

1916: THE TRIO OF LITTLE SHEPHERDS. By continuing to insist, Jacinta and Francisco (who went along to please his sister), finally got what they desired: «my aunt, hoping perhaps to be rid of such persistent requests, even though she knew the children were too small, handed over to them the care of their own flock. Radiant with joy, they ran to give me the news...»⁹³

After a short prayer, they decided each morning on a place where they could meet.

«As soon as we met at the pond, we decided where we would pasture the flock that day. We won over the sheep by sharing our lunch with them. Then off we'd go, as happy and content as if we were going to a festival.»

“HAIL MARY!” «Jacinta loved to hear her voice echoing down the valleys. For this reason, one of our favourite amusements was to climb to the top of the hills, sit down on the biggest rock we could find, and call out different names at the top of our voices. *The name that echoed back most clearly was “Maria”*. Sometimes Jacinta used to say the whole Hail Mary this way, only calling out the following word when the preceding one had stopped re-echoing. We loved to sing, too. Interspersed among the popular songs – of

which, alas! we knew quite a number – were Jacinta’s favourite hymns: *Hail Noble Patroness, Virgin Pure, and Angels, Sing With Me.*»

THE ROSARY SPEEDED UP. «We were very fond of dancing, and any instrument we heard being played by the other shepherds was enough to set us off. Jacinta, tiny as she was, had a special aptitude for dancing.» Thus the hours went by quickly, as they would sing, dance, and play. To stop to recite a whole five decades of the Rosary would require hard effort... So Francisco (the continuation of the story leads us to think that it was likely him) found a convenient solution which made everybody happy:

«We had been told to say the Rosary after our lunch, but as the whole day seemed too short for our play, we worked out a fine way of getting through it quickly. We simply passed the beads through our fingers, saying nothing but “Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary...” At the end of each mystery, we paused awhile, then simply said: “Our Father”, and so, in the twinkling of an eye, as they say, we had our Rosary finished!»⁹⁴

A LIFE SATURATED WITH THE REALITIES OF THE FAITH. Although piety and prayer did not encumber their day or extinguish the ardour of their games, their family education was so supernatural, their baptismal purity so well safeguarded by the vigilance of their parents, that they already lived as it were spontaneously in thoughts of God, whom they would consider intuitively through the beauties of nature, which evoked their wonder.

The sun, the moon, and the stars? For them they were the lamps of Our Lord, Our Lady and the angels:

«In the evening, we would wait for Our Lady and the Angels to light their lamps. Francisco eagerly counted the stars with us, but nothing enchanted him so much as the beauty of sunrise or sunset. As long as he could still glimpse one last ray of the setting sun, he made no attempt to watch for the first lamp to be lit in the sky.

«“No lamp is as beautiful as Our Lord’s”, he used to remark to Jacinta, who much preferred Our Lady’s lamp because, as she explained, “It doesn’t hurt our eyes.”

«Enraptured, he watched the sun’s rays glinting on the window panes of the

homes in the neighbouring villages, or glistening in the drops of water which spangled the trees and furze bushes of the serra, making them shine like so many stars; in his eyes these were a thousand times more beautiful than the Angels' lamps.»⁹⁵

A NEW ST. FRANCIS? Indeed our little shepherd was a great friend of the birds, and he could not bear to see them captured:

«One day we met a little boy carrying in his hand a small bird that he had caught. Full of compassion, Francisco promised him two coins, if only he would let the bird fly away. The boy readily agreed. But first he wished to see the money in his hand. Francisco ran all the way from the Carreira pond, which lies a little distance from the Cova da Iria, to fetch the coins, and so let the little prisoner free. Then, as he watched it fly away, he clapped his hands for joy, and said: “Be careful! Don’t let yourself be caught again!”

«He always kept part of the bread he had for his lunch, breaking it into crumbs and spreading them on top of the rocks, so that the birds could eat them. “Poor wee things! You are hungry”, he said, as though conversing with them. “Come, come and eat!” And they, keen-eyed as they are, did not wait for the invitation, but came flocking around him. It was his delight to see them flying back to the tree tops with their little craws full, singing and chirping in a deafening chorus, in which Francisco joined with rare skill.»⁹⁶

As for Jacinta, she was not less sensible to the beauties of nature. «She was enchanted to look at the beautiful moonlit nights.» She would collect flowers, and in her excessive affection, she would throw them to her cousin as she went to meet her. Once she became a shepherdess, she was full of tenderness for her sheep. Here is a charming incident:

«Jacinta loved to hold the little white lambs tightly in her arms, sitting with them on her lap, fondling them, kissing them, and carrying them home at night on her shoulders, so that they wouldn’t get tired. One day on her way back, she walked along in the middle of the flock. “Jacinta, what are you doing there”, I asked her, “in the middle of the flock?” “*I want to do the same as Our Lord in that holy picture they gave me. He’s just like this, right in the middle of them all, and He’s holding one of them in His arms.*”»⁹⁷

“I AM A POOR SHEPHERD GIRL, I ALWAYS PRAY TO MARY.” But their great treasure was certainly the innumerable hymns whose couplets the excellent memory of Lucy retained by heart. Perfectly adapted to the sentiments of their souls, their very simple words nourished them and opened up to them all the great beauties of the faith. Sometimes alone, sometimes with his sister and his cousin, Francisco, perched on top of a rock, loved to repeat often this beautiful hymn:

«I love God in Heaven
I love Him, too, on earth,
I love the flowers of the fields,
I love the sheep on the mountains.

I am a poor shepherd girl,
I always pray to Mary,
In the midst of my flock,
I am like the sun at noon.

Together with my lambkins,
I learn to skip and jump,
I am the joy of the serra
And the lily of the vale.»⁹⁸

Here are the three simple and pure souls for whom «the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary» had «designs of mercy». Having become witnesses of the apparitions of Our Lady, in a very short time grace would conduct them to heroic degrees of sacrifice and sanctity.

But before that, to prepare their souls for the visit of the Queen of Heaven, God would send them His Angel, as a precursor:

*«Behold, I send My Angel before Thy face,
who shall prepare the way before Thee.» (Mt. 11:10)*

CHAPTER III

THE ANGEL PRECURSOR

Lucy had just turned eight when her mother, in the spring of 1915, had entrusted her with taking care of the family flock. We are going back in time a little bit, to the period when Jacinta and Francisco, to their great sorrow, had still not obtained from their parents the favour of going together with their cousin.

To escape the excessively noisy group of little shepherds that almost always wanted to accompany her on the land – «I did not feel comfortable amid so much shouting», she writes – Lucy chose three companions: Teresa Matias, her sister Maria Rosa and Maria Justino. Teresa Matias related her memories to Father de Marchi:

«Lucy was very amusing. She had a way of getting the best out of us so that we liked to be with her. She was also very intelligent, and could dance and sing and taught us to do the same. We always obeyed her. We spent hours and hours dancing and singing and sometimes forgot to eat. As well as the hymns we used to sing in church I remember one to Our Lady of Mount Carmel which I still sing as I go about my work and which my children have already learned.»⁹⁹

It was in the company of these three friends, doubtless chosen for their great seriousness and their piety, that Lucy would be favoured three times, in a mysterious way, with the apparition of the angel.

I. A PRELUDE: THE THREE APPARITIONS OF 1915

«From what I recall of the weather», Lucy notes, «I think that this must have happened between the months of April and October in the year 1915.»¹⁰⁰ The little shepherds had led their sheep to the hill of the Cabeço:

«Together with our flocks, we climbed almost to the top of the hill. At our feet lay a wide expanse of trees – olives, oaks, pines, holm oaks, and so on. Around midday, we ate our lunch. After this, I invited my companions to

pray the Rosary with me, to which they eagerly agreed.»

A MYSTERIOUS VISION. «We had hardly begun when, there before our eyes, we saw a figure poised in the air before the trees; it looked like a statue made of snow, rendered almost transparent by the rays of the sun.»¹⁰¹

In another place, Lucy describes the same vision this way:

«I saw, poised in the air above the trees that stretched down to the valley which lay at our feet, *what appeared to be a cloud in human form, and almost transparent.*»¹⁰²

«“What is that?”, asked my companions, quite frightened. “I don’t know!” We went on praying, with our eyes fixed on the figure before us, and as we finished our prayer, the figure disappeared.»¹⁰³

A MYSTERIOUS, BUT AUTHENTIC APPARITION. Later on, Lucy would recognize in this mysterious figure the same Angel that she was to contemplate again in 1916. But this first time, the luminous figure, which appeared from afar off, neither spoke nor even manifested itself very distinctly. «He dared not manifest himself openly at that time», wrote Lucy. A startling vision, which is however solidly attested, for the three companions of Lucy told about it right away, and thus the fact became known to the village:

«I resolved to say nothing, but my companions told their families what had happened the very moment they reached home. *The news soon spread*, and one day when I arrived home, my mother questioned me: “Look here! They say you’ve seen I don’t know what, up there. What was it you saw?” “I don’t know”, and as I could not explain it myself, I went on: “It looked like *a person wrapped in a sheet!*” As I meant to say that I couldn’t discern its features, I added: “*You couldn’t make out any eyes, or hands, on it.*” My mother put an end to the whole matter with a gesture of disgust: “Childish nonsense!”»¹⁰⁴

Basing themselves on the clumsy expressions used by the seers to describe the apparition, the adversaries of Fatima wished to see in this only a «banal hallucination». But this convenient hypothesis has no foundation. In fact the very rare examples that the psychiatry manuals usually give to illustrate the vague and imprecise notion of “collective hallucination”, have nothing in

common with the testimony of Lucy and her three companions. Here there is no physical exhaustion, no anxious waiting for the saving image to finally appear, no suggestive influence of one of the seers over the others, no divergence in the description of the object contemplated, in short, none of the characteristics of collective hallucination.¹⁰⁵

On the contrary, the astonishment of the children before a vision that they are not able to identify and whose significance they do not understand, instead proves its certain objectivity. It is the opposite of the hallucinatory process by which the mental illness (for hallucination never takes place without a psychological disorder), unduly confers real existence to its overexcited phantasms of the senses or will. Here, the seers do not say: «We have seen an angel!» No, they saw «something» which, in their inadequate childish language, they had a good deal of difficulty in describing. They do it so clumsily that they become the laughingstock of those around them. And yet, they will say that two other times they saw the same mysterious being, «having a human form»:

«After some time, we returned with our flocks to the same place, *and the very same thing happened again*. My companions once more told the whole story. After a brief interval, *the same thing was repeated*. It was the third time that my mother heard all these things being talked about outside, without my having said a single word about them at home. She called me, therefore, quite displeased, and demanded: “Now let us see! What is it that you girls say you saw over there?” “I don’t know, mother. *I don’t know what it is!*”

«*Some people started making fun of us*. As I had become a little reserved for a while since my First Communion, remembering what had happened, my sisters with a little scorn asked: “Do you see someone wrapped in a sheet?”»¹⁰⁶

Already in 1917 Canon Formigao had taken down the testimony of Maria Rosa, who remembered the affair.¹⁰⁷ In the 1960’s, the three companions of Sister Lucy were interrogated by Father Kondor, and later on by Father Alonso. Each time, they confirmed the account of the Memoirs of Lucy in all its details.

Mysterious and puzzling as they are, these three apparitions are not therefore any less certainly authentic. What then can their significance be, since the Angel did not transmit any message that year?

A SECOND “DIVINE TOUCH”. The events which followed allow us to understand. God had chosen His messenger, and began to prepare her for her future mission by her first mystical graces, and by the veiled announcement of great sufferings.

After the smile of Our Lady, this new “divine touch”, this silent “contact” with the supernatural world had to contribute to sanctifying her soul. «This apparition», Lucy writes, «left an impression on my mind that I cannot explain.» It had lasted as long as the recitation of the Rosary. Nevertheless, «little by little», Lucy continues, «this impression disappeared and I believe that with time I would have completely forgotten it, had it not been for the events which followed.»¹⁰⁸ In the divine plan, however, it was only a simple prelude.

THE TRIAL OF SUFFERING. For the future seer, it was also a first and sorrowful trial. Already she was learning what it costs “to have visions” and to be the confidante of Heaven. Far from profiting from it, from finding herself exalted and adulated, she lost everything that made up her childhood happiness. She had been loved and cherished by all her family; now she lost their confidence and affection. Speaking of the derision of her mother and her sisters, Lucy insists: *«I felt these contemptuous words and gestures very keenly, as up to now I had been used to nothing but caresses. But this was nothing, really. You see, I did not know what the good Lord had in store for me in the future.»*¹⁰⁹ The poignant drama that the second Memoir relates for us had just begun: crosses and family trials and loneliness went together with the increasing favours of Heaven.

Yet from this announcement, imperceptible and veiled as it was, the intelligent and prudent Lucy was to draw a very practical lesson: during the apparitions of 1916 and 1917, she would always seek to be quiet whenever possible, only revealing to others the bare minimum.

A year later, the angel would manifest himself again three more times, but now it would be to the three privileged ones of Our Lady, and in all clarity. He came as Precursor to instruct and prepare them to receive and understand the great message of the Queen of Angels, which they were soon to live and transmit.

II. THE MESSAGE OF THE ANGEL: THE THREE APPARITIONS OF 1916

«Around this time Francisco and Jacinta sought and obtained permission from their parents to start taking care of their own flock. So I left my good companions, and I joined my cousins, Francisco and Jacinta, instead. To avoid going to the serra with all the other shepherds, we arranged to pasture our flocks on properties belonging to my uncle and aunt and my parents.»¹¹⁰

It was when the trio had been reunited that the three great angelic manifestations took place, in the spring, summer and fall of 1916. «The dates I cannot set down with certainty», Lucy writes, «because at that time I did not know how to reckon the years, the months, or even the days of the week.»¹¹¹ However, by remembering the weather outside, she was able to indicate the season when each of the three apparitions took place. Lucy had just turned nine, Francisco was barely eight, and Jacinta was only six years old.

«I AM THE ANGEL OF PEACE»

This morning, our three shepherds had led their sheep to the east side of the Cabeço. Here is Sister Lucy's description of the events:¹¹²

«Around the middle of the morning, a fine rain began to fall, so fine that it seemed like mist. We went up the hillside, followed by our flocks, looking for an overhanging boulder where we could take shelter. Thus it was for the first time that we entered this *blessed hollow* among the rocks. It stood in the middle of an olive grove belonging to my godfather Anastacio. From there, you could see the little village where I was born, my parents' home and the hamlets of Casa Velha and Eira da Pedra.»¹¹³

«We spent the day there among the rocks, in spite of the fact that the rain was over and the sun was shining bright and clear. We ate our lunch and said our Rosary. I'm not sure if it was said in the way I have already described, saying just the words "Hail Mary" and "Our Father" on each bead, so great was our eagerness to get to our play! Our prayer finished, we started to play "pebbles"!»

"A YOUNG MAN WHITER THAN SNOW." «We had enjoyed the game for a few moments only, when *a strong wind began to shake the trees*. We looked up, startled, to see what was happening, for the day was unusually

calm.

«Then we saw coming towards us, above the olive trees, the figure I have already spoken about. Jacinta and Francisco had never seen it before, nor had I ever mentioned it to them. As it drew closer, we were able to distinguish its features. *It was a young man, about fourteen or fifteen years old, whiter than snow, transparent as crystal when the sun shines through it, and of great beauty.*»

“PRAY WITH ME.” «We were surprised, absorbed, and struck dumb with amazement. On reaching us, he said:

«Do not be afraid! I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me.»

«Kneeling on the ground, he bowed down until his forehead reached the ground. Led by a supernatural impulse, we did the same, and repeated the words which we heard him say:

«My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love You! I ask pardon of You for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love You!»

«Having repeated these words three times, he rose and said:

«Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications.»

«Then he disappeared.»

FROM SIMPLE FAITH TO THE GRANDIOSE VISION. While tending their sheep, Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco loved to sing this beautiful verse in honour of the angels:¹¹⁴

«Holy Angels, sing with me!
Holy Angels, sing with me!
I cannot give thanks enough,
Holy Angels, do it for me.»¹¹⁵

Is it not touching to see the Angel making the same request of them in turn: “Pray with me”? What a marvellous response.

The devotion to the Holy Angels was very much alive in Portugal at that time; thus the celestial spirits were far from being unknown to our three shepherds. Morning and evening they invoked their Guardian Angel by a short prayer: «Praised be our Guardian Angel who watches over us night and day. May he always be in our company!»¹¹⁶

What a difference however, between their simple faith, their family devotion, and the grandiose reality of the Apparition! The descriptions Sister Lucy has given to us are more reminiscent of the biblical theophanies than the way these things are depicted in classical religious art. As at Horeb, when it was given to Elijah to enter into the presence of God¹¹⁷, as at the Cenacle, at the moment when the divine Spirit descended on the Apostles, or finally at Massabielle, when the Immaculate Conception came to visit Bernadette, it is by a sudden and mysterious wind that the Angel of Fatima announced his approach.¹¹⁸ «You make the winds your messengers, you walk on the wings of the wind», says the psalmist in speaking to the Master of Creation. (Ps. 104:3)

Again, what could be more in harmony with the great tradition of the apparitions of Angels than the first words of the Angel of Fatima: «Fear not! I am the angel of peace»? They sound just like the words of the Gospel. In the temple of Jerusalem, in the house of Nazareth, or in the fields of Bethlehem, as at the entrance to the tomb of Jesus, the presence of the Angel always fills the witnesses with astonishment, and he must first reassure them. «Fear not!» he says to Zachary and the Blessed Virgin, to the shepherds on the night of the Nativity, and to the holy women on the morning of the Resurrection.¹¹⁹

As for his appearance, Sister Lucy affirms that he resembled a young man, of great beauty, around fourteen or fifteen years old, whiter than snow and resplendent with a crystal-clear light, so much so that when Canon Barthas asked, «What was he like?» she summed up her response in this laconic expression: «*Era de luz*. He was of light.»¹²⁰ Here also is a completely biblical expression. The Angel who announced the resurrection of Christ, relates St. Matthew, had an appearance as of lightning, and his raiment was *white as snow*. (Mt. 28:3) And the same Evangelist, describing Our Lord transfigured on Tabor says: «His face shone like the sun, and His garments became *white as snow*.» (Mt. 17:12)

«God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all» (1 Jn. 1:5), and whenever He deigns to manifest Himself to men, by the ministry of Angels or the mediation of

His Holy Mother, He appears to us clothed in splendour, according to the beautiful verses of the Psalm: «O Lord, my God, Thou art very great! Clothed with honour and majesty, *arrayed with light as with a cloak.*» (Ps. 104:1-2) At Fatima, after each of the apparitions (which moreover always took place at noon, as is also remarkable), this word “Light” always comes back to the lips of the seers.

THE OVERWHELMING DIVINE PRESENCE. To this sparkling light which sometimes became dazzling, corresponds the intensity of the supernatural atmosphere, the overwhelming weight of the divine Presence which leaves the natural faculties inhibited, almost paralyzed.

«The supernatural atmosphere which enveloped us, Sister Lucy writes, was so intense that for a long time *we were scarcely aware of our own existence*, remaining in the same posture in which he had left us, and continually repeating the same prayer. The presence of God made itself felt so intimately and so intensely that we did not even venture to speak to one another. Next day, we were still immersed in this spiritual atmosphere, which only gradually began to disappear.

«*It did not occur to us to speak about this apparition, nor did we think of recommending that it be kept secret. The very apparition itself imposed secrecy.* It was so intimate, that it was not possible to speak of it at all. The impression it made upon us was all the greater perhaps, in that it was the first such manifestation we had experienced.»¹²¹

Sister Lucy tells us that Francisco did not have the privilege of hearing the words of the Angel; the others had to repeat them to him. The same was true of all the other apparitions. However, we can say that he was favoured with the essential: the heavenly vision and the infused graces which this imparted to their souls. For the Angel did not come merely to speak with them, he also came to fill them with a very elevated mystical grace, by which they felt themselves penetrated by the Divine Presence. «This apparition of the Angel, and everything that he said and did was so intimate, so interior, so intense.»¹²² Besides being the Messenger of God, the Angel also seems to have been for them the one who mediated and revealed the Divine Presence.¹²³

The Presence of God is something stupendous, even crushing, for our feeble human faculties. But this «*annihilation before the Divine Presence*»,¹²⁴ to use

the expression of Sister Lucy, was for the three future messengers of Our Lady the surest school of true and profound humility, which is first of all the intimate knowledge of the infinite sanctity of God and the nothingness of the creature.

In addition to the message which the seers began to put in practice right away – «from then on, we used to spend long periods of time, prostrate like the Angel, repeating his words, until sometimes we fell, exhausted»¹²⁵ – the visit of the Angel also obtained for them intimate graces of peace and joy in God: *«the peace and happiness which we felt were great, but wholly interior, for our souls were completely immersed in God. The physical weakness that came over us was also great.»*¹²⁶

Make no mistake, however; after a few days our little shepherds recovered along with their normal state, their customary gaiety as well as their games and chants. The extraordinary mystical graces they had just received did not metamorphosize them into adults overnight. No, they remained true children, and at that age (nine, eight and six!) one passes with disconcerting rapidity from one pastime to another! And so they quickly resumed their lives as young shepherds, doubtless with more piety, but without anything apparently to distinguish them from the other children of Aljustrel.

This secret grace, knowledge of which they jealously kept to themselves, reinforced still more their supernatural friendship, and prepared them to receive together new visits from their heavenly teacher...

«I AM THE ANGEL OF PORTUGAL»

“AT THE HEIGHT OF SUMMER.” «The second apparition must have been at the height of summer, when the heat of the day was so intense that we had to take the sheep home before noon and only let them out again in the early evening. We went to spend the siesta hours in the shade of the trees which surrounded the well that I have already mentioned several times.¹²⁷»

PRAYER AND SACRIFICE. «We were playing on the well. Suddenly, we saw the same Angel right beside us.»

«What are you doing? Pray, pray very much! The Holy Hearts of Jesus

and Mary have designs of mercy on you. Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High.»

«“How are we to make sacrifices?” I asked.»

«Make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners.

«You will thus draw down peace upon your country. I am its Angel Guardian, the Angel of Portugal.

«Above all, accept and bear with submission the suffering which the Lord will send you.»¹²⁸



“The Well” situated on the property of Lucy’s parents. It was here that “the Angel of Portugal” appeared to the seers for the second time, in the summer of 1916.

«We chose this spot some years later for our more intimate talks, our fervent prayers, and... our tears as well – and sometimes very bitter tears they were. We mingled our tears with the water of the same well from which we drank. Does this not make the well itself an image of Mary, in whose Heart we dried out tears and drank of the purest consolation?» (I, p. 23).

FROM HOREB TO THE CABEÇO. One must read and reread these accounts of the apparitions of the Angel, to appreciate their conciseness and limpidity, as well as the nobility in all the requests and attitudes. We do not find in them an ounce of vulgarity, nothing incongruous, childish or banal. Nor is there anything emphatic or artificial, which would betray the voice of a theologian. No, there

are nothing but profound truths, expressed simply, with vigour.

Since the words of the Angel, pronounced during each of his three apparitions, form a whole, perfectly coherent, later on we will look more closely at the most important parts of this *angelic catechesis*.

Let us consider here a tiny detail, which is reminiscent of the great biblical theophanies. It is the interpellation, so abrupt and eloquent, that the Angel addresses to the children while they are playing. They are found word for word in the book of Kings, when the Voice of God spoke to Elijah, at Mount Horeb: «What are you doing, Elijah?» (1 Kg. 19:9 & 13) It was the same with the seers of Fatima: «What are you doing? Pray! Pray much!»

The lesson was not in vain. In the autumn, when he came for the last time, to distribute to them the Bread of Angels, the children were no longer playing, but prostrate on the ground, repeating the prayer which the Angel had taught them.

“THE ANGEL IS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN ALL THAT!” Francisco himself, who could not hear his words and could only understand them with difficulty when Lucy repeated them, was captivated by the beauty of the Angel and the intensity of the supernatural light which accompanied it. Here is the moving account:

«At the second apparition of the Angel, down by the well, Francisco waited a few moments after it was over, then asked:

«“You spoke to the Angel. What did he say to you?” “Didn’t you hear?”
“No. I could see that he was talking to you. I heard what you said to him, but what he said to you, I don’t know.”

«As the supernatural atmosphere in which the Angel left us had not yet entirely disappeared, I told him to ask Jacinta or myself next day. “Jacinta, you tell me what the Angel said.” “I’ll tell you tomorrow. Today I can’t talk about it.”

«Next day, as soon as he came up to me, he asked me: “Did you sleep last night? *I kept thinking about the Angel, and what he could have said.*” I then told him all that the Angel had said at the first and second apparitions. But it seemed that he had not received an understanding of all that the words meant, for he asked: “Who is the Most High? What is the meaning of: ‘The

Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications...?”

«Having received an answer, he remained deep in thought for a while, and then broke in with another question. But my mind was not yet free, so I told him to wait until the next day, because at that moment I was unable to speak! He waited quite contentedly, but he did not let slip the very next opportunity of asking more questions. This made Jacinta say to him: “Listen! We shouldn’t talk much about these things.”

«When we spoke about the Angel, I don’t know what it was that we felt. “I don’t know how I feel”, Jacinta said. “*I can no longer talk, or sing, or play. I haven’t enough strength for anything.*” “Neither have I”, replied Francisco, “but what of it? *The Angel is more beautiful than all this. Let’s think about him.*”»¹²⁹

THE ANGEL OF THE EUCHARIST

«The third apparition must have taken place in October, or towards the end of September, as we were no longer returning for siesta.» On this day the three shepherds had pastured their flocks at the *Pregueira*, a small olive grove which belonged to the dos Santos, on the south side of the Cabeço.

«After our lunch, we decided to go and pray in the hollow among the rocks on the opposite side of the hill.¹³⁰ To get there, we went around the slope, and had to climb over some rocks above the Pregueira. The sheep could only scramble over these rocks with great difficulty.

«As soon as we arrived there, we knelt down, with our foreheads touching the ground, and began to repeat the prayer of the Angel: “My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love You...”

«I don't know how many times we repeated this prayer, when an extraordinary light shone upon us. We sprang up to see what was happening, ***and beheld the Angel. He was holding a chalice in his left hand, with the Host suspended above it, from which some drops of Blood fell into the chalice.***

«Leaving the Chalice and the Host suspended in the air, the Angel knelt

down beside us and made us repeat three times:

«Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the sacrileges, outrages and indifference by which He Himself is offended. And through the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of You the conversion of poor sinners.»

«Then, rising, he took the Chalice and the Host in his hands. He gave the Sacred Host to me, and shared the Blood from the Chalice between Jacinta and Francisco, saying as he did so:

«Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men! Make reparation for their crimes and console your God.»

«Once again, he prostrated on the ground and repeated with us, three times more, the same prayer, “Most Holy Trinity...”, and then disappeared.

«Moved by a supernatural force which enveloped us, we had imitated the Angel in everything, that is, we prostrated as he did and repeated the prayers that he said...

«We remained a long time in this position, repeating the same words over and over again.¹³¹

«It was Francisco who realized that it was getting dark, and drew our attention to the fact, and thought we should take our flocks back home.»¹³²

“I FELT THAT GOD WAS IN ME.” There is a very clear gradation in the apparitions of the Angel, and the third, which was spent entirely in the miraculous Communion given to the seers, truly marks the high point. On that day they had a sort of “*Eucharistic theophany*”, during which it was given to them to contemplate the drops of Precious Blood falling from the Sacred Host into the chalice.

Lucy insists again this time on the state of physical exhaustion in which the angelic apparition plunged them:

«In the third apparition, *the presence of the supernatural was still more intense*. For several days, even Francisco did not dare to talk. He said later on, “*I love to see the Angel, but the trouble is that later on, we are incapable of doing anything*. I could not even walk any more, I didn’t know what was the matter!”»

It was a grace so sublime, and so intimate, that Francisco, all absorbed in God, did not have a clear consciousness of the mystical grace that he had received and felt in a confused way:

«Once the first few days were over, and we had returned to normal, Francisco asked: “The Angel gave you Holy Communion, but what was it that he gave to Jacinta and me?” “It was Holy Communion, too”, replied Jacinta, with inexpressible joy. “Didn’t you see that it was the Blood that fell from the Host?” “*I felt that God was within me, but I did not know how.*”

«Then, prostrating on the ground, he and his sister remained for a long time, saying over and over again the prayer of the Angel: “Most Holy Trinity...”»¹³³

III. A LIVING CATECHISM

When after some time the supernatural atmosphere in which the visits of the Angel had plunged them disappeared, there remained for the three seers, along with the durable fruits of such sublime mystical graces, a clear message, fully adapted to their understanding, summed up in the pressing recommendation of the Angel of Arneiro [this refers to the name of the property where the family well was located]: “*Offer without ceasing prayers and sacrifices to the Most High!*” Without delaying, they would soon put it into practice with a marvellous generosity, thus preparing their hearts without knowing it for the still greater graces which Our Lady was reserving for them.

THEIR HEROIC PRAYER. “*Pray! Pray a great deal!*” the Angel had said to them. But he had added a gesture to these words and given them the example. They felt moved to imitate him, repeating unceasingly, prostrate on the ground like him, the two beautiful prayers he had taught them. This would be their first act of mortification, which they carried even to the point of heroism:

«From this moment on (summer 1916), writes Sister Lucy, we had begun to offer to the Lord everything that mortified us, but without looking to impose particular penances on ourselves, except to pass *entire hours* prostrated on the ground, repeating the prayer which the Angel had taught us...»¹³⁴ «We remained prostrate a long time, sometimes repeating these prayers *even to the point of exhaustion.*»¹³⁵

Sometimes poor Francisco could go on no longer:

«Afterwards, when we prostrated to say that prayer, he was the first to feel the strain of such a posture; but he remained kneeling, or sitting, and still praying until we had finished. Later he said: “I am not able to stay like that for a long time, like you. *My back aches so much that I can’t do it.*”»¹³⁶

THE NOVITIATE OF SUFFERING. However, it was God Himself who would send His chosen ones the most meritorious sacrifices. In reading the Memoirs of Sister Lucy it becomes clear that the overwhelming trials that were to overcome her family coincided almost exactly with the time of the first apparitions. Little by little, the family atmosphere grew more unhappy, and this was all the more painful for the seer because until then she had known unalloyed joy in the midst of her family that she tenderly cherished, and which cherished her in return. The sorrow of her mother (and here we see the generosity of her filial love), would intimately affect her:

«During this period, my two eldest sisters left home, after receiving the sacrament of matrimony. My father had fallen into bad company, and let his weakness get the better of him; this meant the loss of some of our property. When my mother realized that our means of livelihood were diminishing, she resolved to send my two sisters, Gloria and Caroline, to work as servants. At home, there remained only my brother, to look after our few remaining fields; my mother to take care of the house; and myself, to take our sheep out to pasture.

«My poor mother seemed just drowned in the depths of distress. When we gathered round the fire at night time, waiting for my father to come in to supper, my mother would look at her daughters’ empty places and exclaim with profound sadness: “*My God, where has all the joy of our home gone?*” Then, resting her head on a little table beside her, she would burst into bitter tears. *My brother and I wept with her.* It was one of the saddest scenes I

have ever witnessed. What with longing for my sisters, and seeing my mother so miserable, I felt my heart was just breaking.»¹³⁷

All the more so when a new trial came on the horizon:

«At that time my brother Manuel reached the age for enlistment in the army. Since his health was excellent, there was every reason to expect that he would be drafted. Besides, there was a war on and it would be difficult to obtain his exemption from military service.»

It was a new source of distress for poor Maria Rosa.

«Although I was only a child, I understood perfectly the situation we were in. Then I remembered the Angel's words: "*Above all, accept submissively the sacrifices that the Lord will send you.*" At such times, I used to withdraw to a solitary place, so as not to add to my mother's suffering, by letting her see my own. This place, usually, was our well. There, on my knees, leaning over the edge of the stone slabs that covered the well, my tears mingled with the water below, and *I offered my suffering to God*. Sometimes, Jacinta and Francisco would come and find me like this, in bitter grief. As my voice was choked with sobs and I couldn't say a word, they shared my suffering to such a degree that they also wept copious tears.»¹³⁸

These hard trials did not leave the seers overwhelmed; the Angel had announced these sufferings to the children, and he had invited them to *offer their sufferings*, in reparation for the sins of men, for the consolation of God, and the conversion of sinners. By an infused grace, the words of the Angel had penetrated very profoundly into their souls:

«These words were indelibly impressed upon our minds. *They were like a light which made us understand who God is, how He loves us and desires to be loved, the value of sacrifice*, how pleasing it is to Him and how, on account of it, He gives the grace of conversion to sinners. It was for this reason that we began, from then on, to offer to the Lord all that mortified us...»¹³⁹

Thanks to the ministry of the Angel, who had become their teacher and catechist, the shepherds learned to pray and offer their sacrifices. Sanctified by the Bread

of Angels, they were ready from then on to welcome the Queen of Heaven, and bear witness to Her apparitions and message even to the point of heroism.

As for the apparitions of the Angel, because they were above all destined for the sanctification of their souls, moved by grace they kept them rigorously secret.

IV. A CATECHESIS FOR OUR TIMES

A PROPHETIC MESSAGE? The message of the Angel, which was destined in the first place for the three seers, was not to remain forever reserved for them alone. When the moment came that it could be understood in the great light of the message of Our Lady, and situated in its rightful place in the revelations of Fatima, Sister Lucy felt supernaturally moved to make it known. She wrote a detailed account of these apparitions in 1937, in her second Memoir.¹⁴⁰ This was done to make it understood that the Angelic words were destined for us also...

For our part we must meditate on these wonderful words and profit by them. Even before considering the unheard of miracles by which God Himself guaranteed the whole of the message and indicated to us its primordial importance, the words of the Angel impress themselves on our attention because of their own content. By their simplicity and their great richness, by their doctrine, so traditional and yet so fresh and original, and in their clear accentuation of certain aspects of dogma, they already demonstrate their supernatural origin. This message, so sober in its expression and burning with love in its content, could not have been invented by any human imagination, not by any theologian, or even by the seer herself. It can only be a heavenly message, «the language of the angels», as St. Joan of Arc said. When St. Joan was asked, «How did you know that it was St. Michael that appeared to you?» she answered, «I knew it by his manner of speaking and *the language of the Angels.*»¹⁴¹

At Fatima, the words of the Angel, brief as they are, already present themselves as a first formulation, a first synthesis of the unique message, which constitutes for our century a condensation of the Gospel, or better still, by its precise and dogmatic character, *a catechism*, perfectly adapted to our times of apostasy. So true is this that it sometimes appears, as we will see, *quasi prophetic*.

With our three shepherds, «let us become little children again», according to the

Gospel, and let us be taught by the Messenger of Heaven.

THE SANCTITY OF THE MOST HIGH

The Angel reminds us first of all of the greatness, the adorable sanctity of our God. From the Angel's very first visit, right after he reassured the children, who were seized with fear and astonishment by the sight of his glittering light, the Angel «*knelt on the earth and bowed his forehead to the ground*», to pray to God. Preaching by his example, having prostrated himself in this way he pronounced three times the beautiful "theological prayer", composed of acts of faith, hope and charity, to which is added an act of adoration.

In the autumn, before the Chalice and Host suspended in mid-air, the Angel bowed down to the ground and his first words are again *an act of adoration*: «Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore You profoundly...» After distributing Communion to the children, he bowed down again. At Lourdes, Bernadette had learned through a supernatural mimicry, how to make a beautiful and worthy sign of the cross like the Blessed Virgin; here, the children learned from the Angel for all times this gesture of adoration: «*Moved by the supernatural force which enveloped us, we imitated the Angel in everything*», writes Lucy; «that is, we bowed down like him and repeated the same prayers that he said.»

«Our Father... hallowed be Thy name... on earth as it is in Heaven!» In Heaven, such as it was granted to St. John to contemplate: «all the angels stood round the throne... they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God...» (Apoc. 7:11) In the hour of His agony, Jesus Himself «fell down on the ground and prayed». (Mk. 14:35) «He knelt down and prayed», St. Luke tells us (Lk. 22:41). Fatima recalls the Gospel to us: God is Holy, He wishes to be adored.¹⁴² What a lesson for modern man who, in his foolish pride and self-worship, refuses to bend the knee before his God!

THE HOLY TRINITY. This God that the Angel adores is the only true God, revealed by Jesus Christ and taught by the Holy Catholic Church, the One and Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If one of the two prayers taught by the Angel is explicitly addressed to the Holy Trinity, the Angel venerates the Trinity in another way also, discreetly, but in conformity with the liturgical tradition of the Church, by his triple *Kyrie*, his triple *Sanctus*. In the spring, he repeats three

times the prayer, «My God, I believe...» In the autumn, he repeats the Trinitarian prayer of Eucharistic offering three times before distributing Communion to the children and three times afterwards. Certainly it is not by chance either that the Angel appeared three times in 1915 and three times in 1916.

The shepherds well remembered this angelic lesson when, on May 13, 1917, in their mystical joy at seeing themselves transformed in God, they exclaimed spontaneously: «O Most Holy Trinity, I adore Thee! My God, my God, I love Thee in the Most Blessed Sacrament!» This presence of the mystery of the Holy Trinity would culminate at Tuy, on June 13, 1929, in the stupendous Trinitarian vision which completed and crowned the cycle of the apparitions of Fatima.

This insistence is more urgent than ever now, when an extravagant ecumenism pretends to reduce our faith in God to the cold, anti-Christ and anti-Trinitarian monotheism of Judaism and Islam.

THE UNIQUE MEDIATION OF THE HOLY HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY

Another remarkable fact is that in each of the three apparitions, the Angel already mentions the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary, as though linked to one another by an indissoluble union. The account of the first apparition even presents a striking phrase which seems to have been hardly noticed. After having taught this completely God-centred prayer, «My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love You», the Angel added: «Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications.» We pray to God, and it is the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary that hear and answer our prayers! How could it better express the truth that we can only go to God and please Him by this *unique and universal mediation*?

Similarly, in the summer of 1916, when the Angel announces to the three seers their future vocation, it is the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary that appear in the foreground as the inseparable mediators of the «Father of Mercies», the unique author of all predestination: «*The Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary*», he tells them, «*have designs of Mercy on you.*»

Finally the third time, in the prayer of Eucharistic offering, it is by «*the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary*» that the Angel begs «the conversion of poor sinners» of the Holy Trinity.

With this constant thought of the mediation of the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary, we are already at the very centre of the Message of Fatima.

SIN AND REPARATION

Another truth of faith, less and less well known, which the Angel of Fatima recalls with insistence, is *the extreme gravity of sin and the necessity to make reparation through love*. It is remarkable that in each of the three apparitions he recommends a *reparatory practice*: first prayer, then sacrifice, and finally the Eucharistic offering and the Communion of reparation.

PRAYER OF REPARATION. The first message of the Angel is completely summed up in the prayer which he taught the children. Besides being an act of faith, hope and charity, and a prayer of adoration, it is at the same time a *reparatory supplication*: it invites us to consider the immense injury done to God by all those who do not believe in Him, do not adore Him, do not hope in Him and do not love Him. It also places before our eyes the immensity of the sins of men. For all these faults, reparation must be made. How is this done? By asking pardon in the name of sinners, *in substituting oneself for them* to obtain mercy for them: «I ask pardon of You for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love You.»

THE SACRIFICE OF REPARATION. The apparition of the Angel at the well of Lucy's family, in the summer of 1916, is completely devoted to teaching the children the practice of sacrifice, offered in reparation to God for «the sins by which He is offended». Let us cite once again this essential message, to which will soon be added the teaching of Our Lady on reparation to Her Immaculate Heart. The Fatima doctrine of reparation, taken as a whole, shows a perfect and complete equilibrium. It is first of all to the “Most High”, to God our Father, outraged by our sins, that we must address our acts of reparation:

«Offer unceasingly prayers and sacrifices *to the Most High*... Make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners... Above all, accept and bear with submission the suffering which the Lord will send you.

«These words were indelibly impressed upon our minds. They were like a

light which made us understand who God is, how He loves us and desires to be loved, *the value of sacrifice, how pleasing it is to Him and how, on account of it, He grants the grace of conversion to sinners.*»¹⁴³

THE PERFECT ACT OF REPARATION: THE EUCHARISTIC OFFERING.

With the prayer of offering which he taught the children and the Holy Communion he distributed to them, the mystery of the Holy Eucharist is the principal revelation of the last apparition of the Angel.

The sins for which he invites us to make reparation are «the outrages, sacrileges and indifference» with regard to Jesus, «present in all the tabernacles of the earth». How can we not be struck by the strong tenor of the words he pronounces while distributing Holy Communion to the children: «Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, *horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Repair their crimes and console your God.*» Indeed, what gravity there is in these offences against Jesus in the sacrament of His Love!

Two years after the death of St. Pius X, who had worked so hard for the development of the cult of the Eucharist in the Church, one might have thought them excessive. But in the last twenty years, however, the truth of these words has been striking!

The beautiful reparatory prayer itself, then, becomes more relevant than ever. It is an offering to the Father, in the Holy Spirit, of Jesus present in all the tabernacles of the earth. The faithful soul thus unites itself spiritually to Jesus Christ, offering Himself at Mass, as the unique Priest and unique Victim, in a sacrifice of satisfaction and propitiation for the salvation of the multitude. Of course, it is in His unique and perfect Person as the Son of God and Saviour, that He offers Himself for us to His Father. Recalling the diverse Realities whose Presence we affirm in the tabernacle, far from being an enumeration of cold scholasticism, evokes on the contrary, in an expressive way, His sorrowful Passion: His Body delivered up for us, His Blood poured out, His Soul in agony and as it were abandoned by God, and finally His Divinity, which pardons and has mercy.¹⁴⁴

This sacrificial character is reinforced still more by an important aspect of the vision: the children could contemplate some drops of the Precious Blood flowing from the Sacred Host and falling into the chalice. This is of capital importance for the theologians themselves, often disposed to minimize the realism, both of

the bodily presence of Jesus as well as the Sacrificial Act of the Mass. The vision at the Cabeço, on the contrary, expresses them forcefully.¹⁴⁵

To sum up, to the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus we join those of the Immaculate Heart of Mary His Mother, our Mediatrix and Co-Redemptrix, to offer them together to the Heavenly Father and obtain from Him the conversion of sinners. What theological riches there are in this brief formula of prayer!

THE COMMUNION OF REPARATION. After the offering of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus to the Heavenly Father, the Angel teaches the children the practice of the *Communion of reparation*, which Our Lord had already requested so insistently of St. Margaret Mary. The angelic formula, so expressive, ought to be learned by heart: «*Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Repair their crimes and console your God.*»

This formula, first of all, has a remarkable theological precision: Lucy shall receive the Host, and Jacinta and Francisco the Blood of the Chalice, but to all three the Angel says: «Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ», to show that whoever communicates under either species, receives Jesus Christ whole and entire, His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity.

It also brings to mind, in striking fashion, how Jesus is outraged in the sacrament of His Love. And along the lines of the message of Paray-le-Monial, it shows us that the most excellent, the most perfect expiation we can make for these “indifferences” and “crimes”, is to go to Communion in the spirit of reparation, to “console our God”. This practice is so important that Our Lady will ask for it again with more precise details at Pontevedra, December 10, 1925.

«*SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME TO ME!*»

Here is still another important aspect of the message of Fatima: the prayers, penances, and above all Communions of little children are very precious in the eyes of God. They have a great value for Him to console His outraged Heart, to repair the crimes and ingratitude of sinners, and finally to obtain from His Mercy the grace of their conversion.

SAINT PIUS X AND FATIMA. And in the first place, had not the Angel come to bring a heavenly confirmation to the recent decision of St. Pius X on the

subject of early Communion for children?¹⁴⁶ The liberating decree *Quam singulari Christus* had been published on August 8, 1910, but it met with an obstinate resistance in a certain part of the clergy. The good Father Cruz and Father Pena, by granting Lucy in 1913 permission to make her First Communion at the age of six, were only docilely applying the directives of St. Pius X.

However, the new parish priest at Fatima, Father Manuel Marques Ferreira, like many priests at the time, was still tinged with the remains of Jansenism. He did not want to hear of First Communion before the age of ten. In the autumn of 1916, Jacinta had just turned six and a half and her brother Francisco eight, and Father Ferreira still did not want to admit either one to the Holy Table. In the spring of 1918, he would refuse to admit Francisco, on the pretext that he did not know the answer to a catechism question. But Heaven had already judged otherwise; Jacinta and Francisco, without the knowledge of their parish priest, had already made their First Communion!

A REAL COMMUNION. In fact, although they had never dared to go to Communion in Church without the authorization of their parish priest, Jacinta and Francisco were sure that they had truly received Communion from the hand of the Angel, at the Cabeço. Although extraordinary and miraculous, their Communion was none the less real, as Lucy has always affirmed without hesitation. «Do you think you really communicated that day as at the Holy Table?» Canon Barthas asked her. «I think so», she answered, «because I felt the contact of the Host as in ordinary Communions.»¹⁴⁷

As for where this Host and consecrated Chalice came from, it would undoubtedly be useless and presumptuous to hypothesize, since nothing in the words of the Angel sheds any light on this mystery. Let us only note, with Canon Barthas, that one could ask the same question for all the saints who received Communion from the hands of an Angel, such as St. Stanislaus Kostka, St. Raymond Nonnatus, and St. Gerard Majella, among many others.

THE DIVINE POLITICS

This word is exact, because the Angel precursor, one year before the great prophetic secret of Our Lady, already speaks to our three shepherds... of politics! Yes, of politics, because not only does he allude to the war then ravaging Europe, but he also indicates its causes and the sure remedies for obtaining

peace.

At the moment when the Angel spoke to them for the first time, in the spring of 1916, Portugal had just entered the war. In February, Parliament decided to honour the English request to seize German ships. War thus became inevitable. Germany declared war on Portugal on March 9, and Austria-Hungary did so a few days later. The government of Lisbon decided to prepare to send an army to the French front.¹⁴⁸

The first words of the Angel, in this context of war, are already a message of hope: «Do not fear», he tells them, «*I am the Angel of Peace.*» Does he not announce, at this moment, that the Divine intervention will soon put an end to the horrible war?

When he comes back for the second time, in the middle of summer, his words are more explicit. After having insistently requested prayers and sacrifices, he adds immediately: «*In this way, you will obtain peace for your country.*»

SIN, WAR AND PEACE. Let us note well that *the Messenger of Heaven did not ask for prayers for peace*. No, he asked the three shepherds to pray and sacrifice «in reparation for the sins by which God is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners». What a profound theology! The number one enemy, the only real cause of war, is always... *sin*. War is simply the divine chastisement for it. Such is the first “political” teaching of the message of Fatima, a message characterized by a precise theology and profound realism. Is not war always the natural and inescapable fruit of the sins of men? Of the pride, ambition, and rapacity of the one side? Of the sensuality, insouciance, treason and blindness of the others?

This is why the «Angel of Peace» teaches that the remedy is first of all supernatural. When the crimes of men have been repaired for and the Justice of God appeased, when the chastisement shall have led sinners to conversion, then and then alone shall peace follow. It is a hard and little known truth, but it is the enduring lesson of Sacred History.

FOR CATHOLIC PATRIOTISM. Fortunately, we are not alone in loving and defending our dear countries, when they are threatened or put to the sword. God Himself from the heights of Heaven watches over them with love and confides their salvation to His Angels. Offer to God prayers and sacrifices of reparation,

teaches the Angel at the Cabeço, «in this way you will obtain peace for your country. *I am its Guardian Angel, the Angel of Portugal.*» What a consoling revelation. Our nations, or at least the ancient Christian countries, are not profane societies, abandoned by God to chance and the accidents of history. Baptized and formed little by little over the centuries by His benevolent Providence, they are willed by God and assured, in spite of their falls and their impieties (which are chastised with justice and through mercy), of His unfailing protection, through the ministry of His Angels.

“I AM THE THE GUARDIAN ANGEL OF PORTUGAL.” Who is this «Angel of Peace» that came to Fatima as a precursor of Our Lady? We cannot say with certitude, since he chose not to reveal his name explicitly.

We might point out however that good Portuguese historians are inclined to recognize in him St. Michael the Archangel, their patron and protector, who had always been venerated as the Guardian Angel of their country. In fact, King Alfonso Henriques, founder of the nation and of the dynasty, having been baptized in a chapel dedicated to St. Michael, chose the Archangel as the special protector of his armies and his kingdom. Since that time, the chapel of the royal palace was always dedicated to him.

The nation remained faithful in its devotion towards the Archangel, to the point where in 1514, at the request of King Manuel I, Pope Leo X granted his nation a special feast in honour of the «Guardian Angel of Portugal», which was solemnly celebrated on the third Sunday of July. At the national monastery at Batalha, where all the kings of the Avis dynasty since John I had been buried, the monks chanted each day an antiphon and prayer in honour of St. Michael, the Guardian Angel of Portugal.¹⁴⁹

During the liturgical reform of Pope St. Pius X (1903-1914), the feast in honour of Portugal's Guardian Angel, which had fallen into disuse, was finally suppressed. The Portuguese bishops understood the significance of this point, and obtained the re-establishment of this feast from Pope Pius XII. Since that time the feast has been solemnly celebrated on June 10, the national holiday commemorating the death of Camoens, the poet who extolled the golden age of Catholic Portugal – when under the monarchy it was also a colonial and missionary power.

This same day was also chosen, quite appropriately, for the great youth

pilgrimage, which for several years has brought together thousands of children at Fatima.

“MICHAEL, THE ANGEL OF PEACE.” Father Martins dos Reis has observed that the other title by which the Angel of Fatima revealed himself – «*I am the Angel of Peace*» – also suggests his identification with St. Michael the Archangel. Indeed, «in the Portuguese tradition, where he is quite prominent, St. Michael is often called the Angel of Peace, especially in the liturgical office of St. Elizabeth of Portugal.»

In addition, in the Roman Breviary as well as in the litanies, the Archangel is also invoked under these titles: «*Auctor pacis*» (Author of Peace) and «*Angelus pacis Michael*» (Michael, the Angel of Peace). As the hymn for Lauds of September 29 says: «May Michael, the Angel of Peace, come from Heaven into our homes, bringing fair peace with him and banishing wars to hell.»

Why then, one might ask, did not the Archangel wish to identify himself clearly, as he had done to Joan of Arc, saying to her: «I am Michael, protector of France»? Perhaps quite simply to better call to mind this traditional truth, that all the Christian nations, along with their proper vocation, also have their Angel guardian, charged with watching over their temporal and supernatural prosperity. The explicit revelation of his name might have given the impression that Portugal enjoyed an exceptional privilege in this regard, while the simple mention of his function as “Guardian Angel of Portugal”, retains the universal character of this protection for Christian nations.

IN THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS AND ANGELS... AND OF “POOR SINNERS”

Usually, when they intervene in the New Testament or in the lives of the Saints, the Angels are nothing more than the messengers of God, charged by Him with transmitting a message to men. And that is all.

The three angelic apparitions of 1916 are much more than that. At the Cabeço, it is truly Heaven that opens up, to plunge the three little seers in ecstasy into its great supernatural light. But it is also the Church triumphant which, in the person of the Angel, unites itself to the Church praying here below. «Pray with me», says the Angel to the children, but he embraces all our intentions and our humble

manner of acting. «He prostrates himself *near us*», notes Lucy. What a marvellous and moving proximity!

The three apparitions of 1916 are also eloquent testimony of the perfect unity of the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church. Far from seeming absorbed in an ethereal contemplation, the Angel on the contrary shows himself preoccupied with our human affairs, with the salvation of sinners, with the war ravaging Europe, and with the peace of the tiny nation of which he is the guardian, full of love.

There is nothing more alien to the Message of Fatima than a merely individualistic piety. The three little shepherds of the obscure hamlet of Aljustrel were still only nine, eight and six years old, they knew neither how to read nor write, they were ignorant of practically everything having to do with the world and the great political events of that time, and yet the Angel of Portugal, just as Saint Michael once spoke to St. Joan «of the great misfortune which was befalling the kingdom of France», opens their pure souls to the thought of the war which was ravaging their country; already he wants to make them solicitous for the salvation of sinners and he invites them to make reparation for them.

Thus at Fatima, from the beginning of the heavenly apparitions, we enter into *the mystery of the communion of saints, which extends quite far, even to the poorest of sinners*. We must all go to Heaven together, under the benevolent protection of the Angels, and by the unique mediation of the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Here are the essential truths, already revealed by the Angel in 1916, and which Our Lady would come to affirm again, developing these truths with more precision while She unveiled, on July 13, 1917, the great design of Divine Mercy for our times.

APPENDIX I

CRITICAL APPRAISAL

This long silence of the three seers was, as we have said, the only serious objection, an objection constantly repeated against the authenticity of the apparitions of the Angel in 1916. Why did Sister Lucy wait until 1937 to write the detailed accounts of them that we, have cited? It is easy for us now, in completing the answers we have already given, to shed all the light one might

desire on this difficulty.

It is true that, from 1916 to 1917, the three seers kept the most absolute silence on the angelic manifestations. Why? How was it possible? Sister Lucy has frequently explained. First of all it was because of the painful experience of 1915. «This was a lesson for me»,¹⁵⁰ she confided to Father Jongen. Even more importantly it was because of the intense, almost overwhelming, supernatural atmosphere which moved them irresistibly to silence: «*The apparition itself imposed on us the secret*»,¹⁵¹ she wrote.

But after the apparitions of Our Lady, when she was able to confide, on several occasions Lucy explicitly revealed what happened in 1916. This is a proven fact, which we can solidly establish.

A SERIES OF IRREFUTABLE TESTIMONIES

1. On these first disclosures, going back to the years 1917-1922, Sister Lucy, in her conversation with Father Jongen, states categorically: «*It is not true that we spoke to no one about these apparitions.*» “To whom did you speak about them?” “*In the first place to the archpriest of Olival. He enjoyed my complete confidence, I hid nothing from him. He recommended that I say nothing to anybody.*»¹⁵² Unfortunately, the parish priest of Olival died in 1924, before having had the chance to confirm the fact. However, there are other witnesses.

2. Lucy also affirms that she spoke about it to her bishop, *Bishop da Silva*. «*He also recommended that I keep it secret*», she assures us. To explain her silence and to justify it, Sister Lucy, in one of her memoirs, reminds her bishop of the fact and the order received: «For me to keep silent», she wrote to him, «was even the first order and the first counsel that God deigned to give me by means of Your Excellency.»¹⁵³

Here is a decisive declaration, for it was published and known by historians even during the lifetime of the Bishop of Leiria. Thus, the seer dared to take him publicly as a witness of her assertions. Although this manifested rather his own negligence or his indecision, Bishop da Silva himself avowed to Canon Barthas that «he knew of these facts for a long time».¹⁵⁴ This amounted to recognizing that he had in effect given an order to Lucy, in 1921 or 1922, to continue to keep silence on the apparitions of the Angel.

These concordant testimonies are undeniable... unless one were to say – which is absurd – that both Lucy and Bishop da Silva were two brazen liars, who together decided to cynically deceive the public. That does not hold water!

3. For his part, *Canon Formigao*, who is above all suspicion, testified both to Father de Marchi as well as to Canon Barthas, that early on he had received the confidences of Sister Lucy on the apparitions of the Angel. But he also recommended silence, «fearing that these accounts of wonders would only increase the defiance and incredulity towards the supernatural events of Fatima, and he also believed that, at that moment, there was no direct utility for the message itself.» No doubt he was wrong, but that is not the question.¹⁵⁵

From then on, Sister Lucy felt bound by obedience. Accused later on of having delayed the disclosure of these facts, her defence was easy: «I always obeyed»,¹⁵⁶ she would content herself in saying.

4. And yet we can cite a *fourth testimony* which corroborates the preceding ones. It is Father Martins dos Reis, who had the merit of being the first to recall it. He himself could prove, if it was necessary, that Lucy remembered perfectly, word for word, the prayers of the Angel and that she recited them already in 1921-1922. In fact, at that time, without of course betraying the secret of their origin, she taught them to one of her intimate friends of Asilo de Vilar. Here is the testimony of this companion of Lucy, who was then called Maria das Dores:¹⁵⁷ «One day they were both in the workshop, embroidering some lacework for a rochet. It was noon, the hour at which the “Directress” and the “Ladies” (the Dorothean Sisters) were having their usual devotions in the chapel of the house.

«At a certain point in the conversation, Maria das Dores said to her companion: “If you like, I can teach you a prayer which serves as a preparation and thanksgiving for Communion, because it contains acts of faith, hope and charity which are very brief and beautiful.” “What is it?” “It goes like this: O My God, I believe, etc.” “This prayer is very beautiful, where did you learn it?” “It is recited a lot in my country.”»

A little later, Lucy taught the same companion, who had become director of the apostolate of prayer, the prayer of the Angel to the Holy Trinity. «It was in October, 1922, because she remembers precisely that it was a few days after she had begun her work as director. Again this time it was Maria das Dores who took the initiative. “If you like, I can teach you a very nice prayer, because it is

precisely for making reparation to the Most Holy Trinity: Most Holy Trinity, etc.” “But how is it that you know such beautiful prayers?” “They are recited where I come from...”»

«And they added nothing more, neither the companion nor Maria das Dores, the one remaining in her ignorance, and the other with her secret.»

Father Alonso, who quotes this account, draws the conclusion: «*This testimony, which we have been able to verify personally, merits total assent...* When we think of the witness, we must recognize that she is incapable of inventing the account and its minutely described details.»¹⁵⁸

THE TESTIMONY OF LUCY

“THESE WORDS WERE INDELIBLY IMPRESSED UPON OUR MINDS.”

This confirms Lucy’s assurance of having kept an exact recollection of the message of the Angel. In 1937, in her second Memoir, she firmly declared: «his words were impressed upon our minds in such a way that we never forgot them.»¹⁵⁹ She repeats the same answer to Father Jongen: «Immediately after the apparition of the Angel, we began to say the prayers he had taught us.» When asked by William Thomas Walsh on July 15, 1946, if she had quoted the words of the Angel «exactly as they were pronounced» or «only giving the general sense», Sister Lucy responded still more clearly: «the words of the Angel were said with such insistence and precision, and in such a penetrating supernatural atmosphere, that *it was impossible to forget them. They impressed themselves exactly, in an indelible manner, in our memory.*»¹⁶⁰

“THE BLESSED HOLLOW OF THE CABEÇO.” Lucy not only remembers the angelic vision and the message received, she has fixed for all times in her memory the exact place where the Angel appeared: «On May 21, 1946, thirty years after the events of the Cabeço, coming back to see the “Loca” of the apparitions of the Angel», Canon Barthas reports, «she went without hesitation to the little circle of rocks which we call the “loca”, contrary to the indications of those who accompanied her, who were guiding her towards the “grotto”, which is a hundred metres further on. Until then this had been presented to the pilgrims as the site of the first and third apparitions of the Angel. Moreover, *she indicated without the least hesitation the places where each and every one of the little circumstances associated with the angelic apparitions took place.*»¹⁶¹ This would

be unthinkable on the hypothesis that the whole thing was made up later on!

FROM JOAN OF ARC TO LUCY OF FATIMA. Does not the calm realism of Lucy's testimony remind us of Joan of Arc, who also enjoyed angelic apparitions? «Do you see St. Michael and the Angels in real, bodily form?» one of her judges asked her. And Joan answered quite ingenuously: «*I see them with my bodily eyes, as I see you*, and when they depart from me, I weep, and I could certainly wish that they take me with them.» «In what form, size, appearance and clothing does St. Michael appear to you?» another asked her. «*He was in the form of a real gentleman...* I believe as firmly the things that St. Michael, who appeared to me, said and did, as I believe that Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered His passion and death for us.» What imperturbable assurance!

And yet, at that very time, Joan had not spoken about her visions to anybody, not to her parents, nor to her parish priest. She only made them known later on, when her mission demanded it, and «only to Robert de Baudricourt and to my king», she declared to her judges.¹⁶²

Sister Lucy does not have any hesitation either on the reality of the Angel of the Cabeço. On February 4, 1946, at Tuy in Spain, Father Jongen came to interrogate her, taking up the same objections as Father Dhanis: «Are you certain, absolutely certain, that the Angel appeared to you?» «*I saw him*», she answered simply. «The Sister pronounces these words», notes Father Jongen, «with the calmness, tranquillity, and assurance of someone saying that he had seen the sun rise or set...»¹⁶³

APPENDIX II

THE REALITY OF THE ANGELIC APPARITIONS

AN «IMAGINARY VISION» OR «SENSIBLE APPARITION»?

Being founded on such solid testimonies, the angelic manifestations at Fatima are unquestionably authentic. Thus they suppose a supernatural intervention, but its nature remains to be discovered. The question is not without importance.

VISIONS AND APPARITIONS. Father Dhanis, using the distinction which has become classical in mystical theology between three kinds of visions, sensible,

imaginative or intellectual, strives to settle the question always in the same sense: to the extent the apparitions of Fatima are authentic, according to him, they are of course, “imaginative visions”.¹⁶⁴ Then one need only give this category of visions recognized as supernatural the ambiguous title of “imaginary visions”, so that their downgrading in the eyes of the worldly is complete.

What exactly is the truth? A brief review of the traditional distinction will permit us to make some enlightening clarifications on the apparitions at the Cabeço.¹⁶⁵

Sensible, imaginative and intellectual visions are all real and objective in the sense that they are not the natural fruit of a diseased imagination, and thus they always imply a divine intervention. But this is different in each case:

In the *intellectual vision*, an intense light is produced directly by God in the spiritual part of the soul, without the accompaniment of any image.

The *imaginative vision*, which is even more clumsily called “imaginary”, is on the contrary provoked by a sensible representation, directly produced by God in the imagination. The visions of St. John in the Apocalypse, and supernatural dreams, for example, come into this category.

On the contrary, in *sensible or corporeal visions*, there is no question of a simple subjective vision or an intellectual intuition. It is a sensible object, *exterior to the subject*, that provokes the perception. We must speak of an “*apparition*” *properly speaking*, if there is a manifestation of a glorious body, Jesus or the Most Holy Virgin, or an assumed body, when an Angel or deceased soul appears. But in both cases there is always a concrete reality, situated in natural space and acting from without on the external senses of the seer.¹⁶⁶

“AN EXTERIOR APPARITION.” Well! Contrary to the gratuitous allegations of Father Dhanis, we can affirm that the seers of Fatima had the very clear impression of contemplating an object really exterior to them. Several details of the account of Sister Lucy give us clear indications, which permit us to recognize the manifestations of the Angel in 1916 as “*apparitions*” *properly speaking*, that is “sensible visions”.

The great blast of wind which announced the first coming of the Angel appeared to the children as an objective physical phenomenon: «We were playing only for a few moments, when a strong wind began to shake the trees. We looked up,

startled, to see what was happening, for the day was unusually calm.» In addition, they saw the Angel, this time coming from a distance: «Then we saw *coming towards us, above the olive trees*, the figure I have already spoken about... *As it drew closer, we were able to distinguish its traits*. It was a young man, whiter than snow... On reaching us, he said...»¹⁶⁷ This situating of the Angel in space, this precise localization within the framework of nature seems significant to us. Unless we imagine, with Descartes, a “deceiving God”, or some kind of “evil genie”, how can we think that a God of truth, in genuine supernatural manifestations, could give His witnesses visions which would lead them invincibly to believe in their exterior reality, when in fact it was only a simple phantasm?

Finally, on the subject of the Communion received from the hands of the Angel, Sister Lucy declared: «*I felt the contact of the Host.*» We certainly cannot speak of an *imaginary Communion* here, and therefore the whole apparition must be put in the category of “sensible visions”.¹⁶⁸

THE SIGN OF A PRESENCE. Shall we say that the corporeal appearance really assumed by the Angel is misleading, inasmuch as it risks concealing its nature as a pure invisible Spirit? No! For this aspect is completely secondary, and scarcely of any importance to us. What is important is the manifestation of his very near and concrete presence, *as a real person*, similar to us, a creature of God like us, and entrusted by Him with a mission for our salvation. Thus, the Angel was present “*in person*” at the Cabeço, and the shining figure of light that the three shepherds contemplated, although it was not “his” body, expressed in a marvellous way his personal presence, and his spiritual nature, so superior to our carnal condition.

«*THIS IS MY BLOOD... POURED OUT FOR YOU*»

At the Cabeço, during the last angelic apparition, before the children received Communion, Lucy the Host and Jacinta and Francisco from the chalice, they saw «*some drops of Blood*» flow from the Host and fall into the chalice. How are we to interpret this Eucharistic miracle? Did the seers contemplate *the true Blood of Christ*, substantially present in the sacrament? They believed so, and it seems to go without saying, for this is what makes all the rich significance of this apparition eminently concrete, as we have seen.

No, the three shepherds were not mistaken, nor were they led into error: it is indeed the Blood of Our Saviour that they saw flowing from the Host into the chalice, and not simply «an appearance of blood».

In this way Jesus shows that His Flesh is truly our Bread, and His Blood is our spiritual Wine, and He invites us to nourish ourselves with It and drink from It, for our salvation.¹⁶⁹

Hence it is evident that, in His Divine Will and the supernatural capacities of His Glorious Body – immense potentialities that we can not limit *a priori* –, *the risen Jesus can also, at will, manifest Himself to us in the Eucharist, not only under the sacramental appearances of bread and wine, but also under the regular appearances of His Body or Blood.*

This was the case at the Cabeço, where He showed the three children in ecstasy the reality of His Blood poured out, which redeems us and purifies us of our faults, true Blood, present in the Sacrament as He was on Calvary. And when, for their Communion, He takes on the species of wine, it is to induce us, in an urgent manner, to drink His Blood which is drink indeed, an inebriating Wine, the pledge and foretaste of eternal life.

Such a Eucharistic miracle thus appears as a true and marvellous illustration of the most profound reality of the mystery. We ourselves, *at every Mass*, can think of the apparition which the three seers of the Cabeço received. We can thus adore with them, with the eyes of faith, the Person of Jesus Christ our Saviour, Priest and Victim, *pouring into the chalice all the Blood of His Body, offered to His Father in sacrifice*, for us and for many, unto the remission of sins.

SECTION II: The cycle of the apparitions of Our Lady

CHAPTER IV

«I AM OF HEAVEN» (SUNDAY, MAY 13)

Several months had already gone by since the first apparition of the Angel and our three seers, in spite of the trials of the dos Santos family, had returned to their singing and their games, «with the same gusto and the same liberty of spirit as before». Winter had passed, and in these beautiful spring days, all three had gone together to take care of their sheep. May 13, 1917, dawned bright and fair, like so many other days before it.¹⁷⁰

I. THE EVENTS

It was the Sunday preceding the Ascension. Early in the morning, the shepherds had gone to the chapel of Boleiros to attend the first Mass, “the Mass of the poor souls”, as it was called then, for it was a Mass celebrated for the souls in Purgatory, a devotion so dear to the piety of the Portuguese.

Scarcely had they returned home when they went out again to feed their sheep. «That day, by chance – if in the designs of Providence there can be such a thing as chance – we chose to pasture our flock on some land belonging to my parents, called *Cova da Iria*», Lucy writes. «This meant we had to cross a barren stretch of moorland to get there, which made the journey doubly long. We had to go slowly to give the sheep a chance to graze along the way, so it was almost noon when we arrived.»¹⁷¹ After eating lunch and reciting the Rosary, they moved their sheep a little higher up the hill and began to play. Before listening to the account of Sister Lucy in the fourth Memoir, we must make some remarks on the history of the apparitions of 1917.

A SHORT CRITICAL NOTE

The oldest source is the report of Father Ferreira, parish priest of Fatima, who interrogated the children after each of the apparitions, in the following days. His extreme introspection, if not declared hostility, are a sure guarantee of objectivity.¹⁷² The minutely detailed interrogations of Canon Formigao, which

took place on September 27, October 11, 13 and 19, and finally November 2, 1917, continue to be of the greatest interest, and we shall come back to them.¹⁷³

Lucy wrote for the first time the account of the six apparitions on January 5, 1922, no doubt at the urging of Msgr. Manuel Pereira Lopes, her confessor at Asilo de Vilar. This document, of capital importance for critical purposes, was published for the first time in 1973.¹⁷⁴

We also find more precise details on the apparitions of 1917 in different letters of Sister Lucy to her confessors.¹⁷⁵

Finally let us point out that although they come later on, the most complete accounts, and even the surest ones from the critical point of view, are those of the Memoirs of Sister Lucy.¹⁷⁶ This seems contrary to the normal laws of criticism, but here are the reasons:

1. At the moment of the apparitions, the seers, who were aged ten, nine and seven, could neither read nor write. Although this is an incomparable guarantee for the complete authenticity of the message, which they could not have invented in any way, when it came time to describe the apparition, or even to explain it in words, their excessively rudimentary knowledge was a real hindrance for them.

Moreover, as we will see, they did not always understand the decisive importance of the interrogations they were made to undergo, and to preserve their secrets or escape from inopportune questions, they sometimes answered, to use Sister Lucy's own expression, «without attributing to it any great importance» and too hastily, without making a sufficient effort to remember exactly.¹⁷⁷

2. Because of the secrets they had to keep, they were bound to also hide whatever could more or less touch on them. This explains their frequent embarrassment, hesitations, or even apparent contradictions. In hindsight we can only admire how they succeeded in making known whatever could be disclosed and keeping secret whatever had to remain so. But this was often a very delicate matter.

3. From this we may conclude, since there is no reason to suspect the testimony of Sister Lucy, that the accounts written by her after she received from Heaven permission to reveal practically everything, are naturally the clearest and the

most coherent, and even permit us to clarify many hesitations or ambiguities of the previous responses.

Here then is how Sister Lucy, in her fourth Memoir, relates the first apparition of Our Lady:

“A WOMAN MORE BRILLIANT THAN THE SUN.” «High up on the slope of the Cova da Iria, I was playing with Jacinta and Francisco at building a little stone wall around a clump of furze. Suddenly we saw what seemed to be a flash of lightning.

– We’d better go home, I said to my cousins, that’s lightning; we may have a thunderstorm.

– Yes, indeed! they answered.

We began to go down the slope, hurrying the sheep along towards the road. We were more or less halfway down the slope, and almost level with a large holm oak tree that stood there, when we saw another flash of lightning. We had only gone a few steps further when, there before us on a small holm oak, we beheld a Lady all dressed in white. She was more brilliant than the sun, and radiated a light more clear and intense than a crystal glass filled with sparkling water, when the rays of the burning sun shine through it.

We stopped, astounded, before the apparition. We were so close, just a few feet from Her, that we were bathed in the light that surrounded Her, or rather, which radiated from Her. Then Our Lady spoke to us:

– ***Do not be afraid. I will do you no harm.***

– *Where does Your Grace come from?*¹⁷⁸

– ***I am of Heaven.***

THE CELESTIAL RENDEZVOUS.

– *What does Your Grace want of me?*

– ***I have come to ask you to come here for six months in succession, on the 13th day, at this same hour. Later on, I will tell you who I am and***

what I want. Afterwards, I will return here yet a seventh time.

THE VOCATION TO HEAVEN.

– *Shall I go to Heaven too?*

– ***Yes, you will.***

– *And Jacinta?*

– ***She will go also.***

– *And Francisco?*

– ***He will go there too, but he will have to say many Rosaries.***

Then I remembered to ask about two girls who had died recently. They were friends of mine and used to come to my home to learn weaving with my eldest sister.

– *Is Maria das Neves in Heaven?*

– ***Yes, she is.***

(I think she was about 16 years old.)

– *And Amelia?*

– ***She will be in Purgatory until the end of the world.***

(It seems to me that she was between 18 and 20 years of age.)

[THE VOCATION OF SUFFERING.¹⁷⁹

– ***Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and of supplication for the conversion of sinners?***¹⁸⁰

– *Yes, we are willing.*

– ***Then you are going to have much to suffer, but the grace of God will be***

your comfort.]

[THE VISION IN GOD. «As She pronounced these last words, “the grace of God will be your comfort”, Our Lady opened Her hands for the first time, communicating to us a light so intense that, as it streamed from Her hands, its rays penetrated our hearts and the innermost depths of our souls, making us see ourselves in God, Who was that light, more clearly than we see ourselves in the best of mirrors.

«Then, moved by an inner impulse that was also communicated to us, we fell to our knees, repeating in our hearts: “*O Most Holy Trinity, I adore You! My God, my God, I love You in the most Blessed Sacrament.*”»]

“QUEEN OF PEACE.” «After a few moments, Our Lady spoke again:

– Pray the Rosary every day, in order to obtain peace for the world, and the end of the war.

*– Can you tell me if the war will go on a long time, or will it end soon?*¹⁸¹

– I cannot tell you that yet, because I have not yet said what I want.»

HEAVEN OPENS UP. «Then She began to rise serenely, going up towards the east, until She disappeared in the immensity of space. The light that surrounded Her seemed to open up a path before Her in the firmament, and for this reason we sometimes said that we saw Heaven opening.»

Once the apparition disappeared, Francisco was the first to notice that the sheep had strayed and invaded a field of green plants. Fortunately, there was no damage! «Luckily», wrote Sister Lucy ingenuously, «we did not see any eaten.»¹⁸²

Our Lady appeared on the little holm oak for about ten minutes: «I do not believe that She ever remained long enough to recite a Rosary»,¹⁸³ said Lucy. What is astonishing, but quite well attested,¹⁸⁴ is that Francisco saw the Blessed Virgin perfectly, but did not hear Her words. He only understood the questions of Lucy. As for Jacinta, who saw and heard everything, she never brought herself to speak to the apparition. Thus Lucy was the only one to have the privilege of speaking with Her.

The fact has been commented on but it must be stressed that this unexpected disparity, this gradation in the relations with Our Lady, is in itself a certain proof of authenticity. For never could anyone, neither the seers nor any impostor, have dreamed of making up this difference which is baffling at first, but, when we reflect on it, testifies decisively in favour of the sincerity of the three little seers.

AFTER THE APPARITION: AN OVERFLOWING JOY

The apparition had filled the three children with an immense joy, and a holy cheerfulness. They had never known anything like it, because the manifestations of the Angel in 1916 had had a completely different effect on their souls. As Sister Lucy explains: «The apparition of Our Lady plunged us once more into the atmosphere of the supernatural, but this time more gently. Instead of that annihilation in the Divine Presence, which exhausted us even physically, it left us filled with peace and expansive joy, which did not prevent us from speaking afterwards of what had happened.»¹⁸⁵ «We felt the same intimate joy, the same peace and happiness», writes Sister Lucy in another place, «but instead of physical exhaustion, an expansive ease of movement: instead of this annihilation in the Divine Presence, a joyful exultation; instead of the difficulty in speaking, we felt a certain communicative enthusiasm.»¹⁸⁶

Francisco did not have to wait several days before learning the message of the Most Holy Virgin:

«Afterwards, we told Francisco all that Our Lady had said. He was overjoyed and expressed the happiness he felt when he heard of the promise that he would go to Heaven. Crossing his hands on his breast, he exclaimed, “Oh, my dear Our Lady! I’ll say as many Rosaries as You want!”»¹⁸⁷

As for Jacinta, she could not contain her joy: «That very afternoon, while we remained thoughtful and rapt in wonder, Jacinta kept breaking into enthusiastic exclamations: “Oh, what a beautiful Lady!” “I can see what’s going to happen”, I said, “you’ll end up saying that to somebody else.” “No, I won’t”, she answered, “don’t worry.”»¹⁸⁸

With Sister Lucy, there was another sentiment in addition to her profound joy: What was her mother going to think, when she heard talk of apparitions again?

And since Our Lady had not asked them to make known what She had said, the prudent Lucy, foreseeing all the problems that could follow, thought quite sensibly that it would be better if they kept quiet. We shall see that several months later, she would come to regret that her cousin had spoken in spite of her strong recommendations to keep silence... Indeed it was Jacinta, Lucy relates, who, «*unable to contain herself for joy*, broke our agreement to keep the whole matter to ourselves». ¹⁸⁹

THE FIRST ACCOUNTS OF THE APPARITION

Jacinta did not have to wait long to break her promise! That Sunday, right after the Mass, the Marto parents had left for Batalha to buy a pig. In the evening, when the children returned from the Cova da Iria, they had not come back yet. Jacinta stood near the gate waiting for them, and as soon as she saw her mother, she ran to greet her:

«My little daughter ran to meet me and clutched me round the knees in a way she had never done before. “Mother”, she cried excitedly, “I saw Our Lady today, in the Cova da Iria!” “That’s likely, isn’t it!” I said. “I suppose you’re a saint to be seeing Our Lady!” Jacinta seemed downcast at what I said, but she came into the house with me, saying again: “But I saw Her!” Then she told me what had happened, of the lightning and their fear because of it... of the light... and the beautiful Lady surrounded by light so dazzling you could hardly look at Her... of the Rosary which they were to say every day...» ¹⁹⁰

Once they were at the table, Jacinta, always full of enthusiasm, began telling what happened. ¹⁹¹ When she had finished, her mother asked Francisco, who had himself said nothing. He then confirmed everything his sister had said. «As for me», he told Lucy the next day, «when my mother asked me if it was true, *I had to say that it was, so as not to tell a lie.*» ¹⁹²

What charming candour in our two seers! It was so manifest that among the numerous guests gathered around Olimpia’s table – that night, besides Ti Marto and the eight children, Antonio dos Santos, his brother-in-law and Lucy’s father, were present –, several of them were shaken up and began to see that perhaps something extraordinary had really happened at the Cova da Iria.

Although Jacinta's older brothers and Ti Olimpia continued to make fun of her, the fathers of the two families remained pensive... They knew very well the sincerity of their children, and could not imagine them lying to such a degree.

«If the little ones saw a lady in white», said Antonio, «what could that be except Our Lady?» There was good sense in this remark. As for Ti Marto, later on he would confide to Father de Marchi his reflections of that time:

«From the beginning of the world, Our Lady has been appearing, at different times and in different ways. These have been the important things. If there had not been such things, the world would be even worse than it is. The power of God is very great. We do not understand everything, but let God's Will be done.

«From the beginning I somehow felt that the children were speaking the truth. Yes, I think I believed them from the first. It seemed to me extraordinary since the children had no instruction whatever about such things, at least hardly anything. If they had not been helped by Providence, how could they have said such things? *And if they were lying? Oh, my Jesus! I knew that Jacinta and Francisco never lied!...*»¹⁹³

A peasant with much good sense and experience, Ti Marto was not a man of exaggerated credulity. But his sense of the supernatural, and no doubt his true humility were the reason why the apparitions met no obstacle to belief in his soul. One day when somebody asked him if he did not feel a little pride, since his children had seen Our Lady, he answered, without any affectation: «Our Lady had decided to come here, in our country. She could have come someplace else... She just happened to come to my children!»¹⁹⁴ But although Ti Marto felt moved to believe in the reality of the apparitions, he was careful not to show it right away. On June 13, we find him still indecisive, wishing neither to go against his children, nor to publicly give credence to their claim.

While he waited, the news spread rapidly. The next morning Olimpia mentioned it to a few neighbours, who promptly passed on the news to Maria dos Anjos, Lucy's elder sister. What a surprise for the little seer to see their secret discovered so soon! When questioned by her sister, Lucy in her turn had to tell what happened, with sorrow but so as to avoid lying.¹⁹⁵

In the meantime, Francisco and Jacinta arrived. Francisco was also very

sorrowful, and he told his cousin how Jacinta had spoken up the evening before, at dinner.

«Jacinta listened to the accusation without saying anything. “You see, that’s just what I thought would happen”, said Lucy. “*There was something within me that wouldn’t let me keep quiet*”, Jacinta said, with tears in her eyes. “Well, don’t cry now, and don’t tell anything else to anybody about what the Lady said to us.” “But I’ve already told them.” “And what did you say?” “I said that the Lady promised to take us to Heaven.” “To think you told them that!” “Forgive me. I won’t tell anybody anything ever again!”»¹⁹⁶

In the future, it is true, after this one fortunate and providential indiscretion, she kept her promise... But it was too late! The whole village would know.

When Maria Rosa found out, at first she did not take it seriously, «but when I told her what Lucy had said to me», continues Maria dos Anjos, «she began to attach some importance to it, and she went right away to ask Lucy about it. The little one told our mother what she had said to me.»¹⁹⁷

PRAYER AND SACRIFICES

When Lucy was interrogated, with humble prudence she declined to affirm categorically that it was the Blessed Virgin, but in vain. Lucy certainly thought this was the case, and all three recognized it without hesitation. Their lives as little shepherds would be transformed even more profoundly than after the visits of the Angel, which were spaced out at greater length, and more unexpected. This time, from month to month the three would live in expectation of the next heavenly visit.

«From then on», says Lucy, «Francisco made a habit of moving away from us, as though going for a walk. When we called him and asked him what he was doing, he raised his hand and showed me his Rosary. If we told him to come and play, and say the Rosary with us afterwards, he replied: “I’ll pray then as well. Don’t you remember that Our Lady said I must pray many Rosaries?”»¹⁹⁸

They also remembered the suffering and sacrifices asked of them:

«“And how shall we make sacrifices?” Right away Francisco found a good sacrifice: “Let us give our lunch to the sheep, and make the sacrifice of doing without it.” In a couple of minutes, the contents of our lunch bag had been divided among the sheep. So that day, we fasted as strictly as the most austere Carthusian!»¹⁹⁹

Thus did they remember the words of the Blessed Virgin, and strove to accomplish Her requests, which are summed up in two words: prayer and sacrifice.

Let us interrupt our account of the events now for a moment, and attentively re-examine this first message of Our Lady. Along with the message of July 13, it is the richest in content and already it evokes most of the themes that the Blessed Virgin returned to in the other five apparitions.

II. THE MESSAGE OF MAY 13

«*DO NOT FEAR... I AM OF HEAVEN!*»

«Do not fear! I will do you no harm.» These were the first words of Our Lady to the three surprised and frightened shepherds. Lucy had often spoken of this fear which seized them during the first apparition,²⁰⁰ but in her Memoirs, seeing that she had often been misunderstood, she gives this clarification:

«The fear which we felt was not really fear of Our Lady, but rather fear of the thunderstorm which we thought was coming, and it was this that we sought to escape. *The Apparitions of Our Lady inspired neither fear nor fright, but only surprise.*

«When I was asked if I had experienced fear, and I said that we had, I was referring to the fear we felt when we saw the flashes of lightning and thought that a thunderstorm was at hand. It was from this that we wished to escape, as we were used to seeing lightning only when it thundered.»²⁰¹

«After these initial words of reassurance, «Do not fear», it is Lucy who, full of good sense, and not without courage, or rather under the effects of a Divine inspiration, dares to ask the Vision:

«Where does Your Grace²⁰² come from?» Then Our Lady gave Her first reply, unexpected but remarkable in its conciseness: «*I am of Heaven!*» She did not say, exactly, «I come from Heaven», which would be true, but banal. No, She said, «I am of Heaven!» and this short phrase which is the first of Her great message, resounds in our ears like a discreet echo of the first phrase of the Our Father: «Our Father, who art in Heaven...» Our Mother also, by a very special grace from the Father of Mercies, can proclaim in Her turn, in all truth: «I am of Heaven!» For these words are evocative of the very mystery connected with Her person...²⁰³

Indeed what other creature could attribute to itself such an origin, if not the Immaculate Virgin, the Heavenly One, the “divine Mary”, as St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort was wont to say? Is not every human creature first of all a descendant of Eve and heir of Adam before becoming later on, when grace is recovered, a child of God and temple of the Holy Spirit? By Her Immaculate Conception, with Jesus Her Son, Mary is the only one in our human lineage to be an exception from the common rule, *in being, so to speak, “of Heaven” before being “of the earth”*.

For the whole of Her ineffable mystery consists in this, that She is the beloved and only Daughter of the Father, the Spouse of the Word of God and the Sanctuary of their Spirit of Love, in the very act of Her conception, because She was predestined to become the worthy Mother of the Saviour and the new Eve, mother of a new human race. Thus, it is the most intimate secret of Her person that the crystalline phrase of May 13, 1917, «I am of Heaven», evokes for us. It also reminds us of Her solemn declaration at the grotto of Massabielle: «I am the Immaculate Conception.» An admirable formula, whose astonishing grammatical structure would become the object of incessant contemplation for St. Maximilian Kolbe.

THE HEAVENLY RENDEZVOUS

«And what does Your Grace want of me?» asked Lucy, always practical, concrete and realistic.²⁰⁴ «I have come to ask you to come here for six months in succession, on the 13th day, at this same hour. Later on, I will tell you who I am and what I want. Afterwards, I will return here yet a seventh time.»

Our Lady kept this heavenly rendezvous In the four following apparitions

preceding October 13, she will recall this request with insistence. Indeed, what wisdom in this choice of place and time! G. de Sede saw in this a sure sign that it could be neither the product of chance, nor of the imagination of the three illiterate children. In fact, in these few phrases of Our Lady the inspired plan of the most frequented pilgrimage in the world is already traced out.

And first of all the place! This Cova da Iria, no doubt so named in honour of St. Irene, the little martyr of purity, massacred at Tomar, around twenty kilometres away, on the order of a suitor she had refused. Yes, Lucy had every reason to stress that her choice of a pasture this morning of May 13 was utterly providential. «Having originally taken a path that would have led to the hamlet of Gouveia, Lucy suddenly decided that the pasture that day would be at the Cova da Iria...» The vast basin with the harmonious name would become the immense domain of the sanctuary of Mary...

A touching coincidence, often pointed out, is that when Our Lady appeared, the children were playing at building; they were making a little stone wall around a clump of furze. At that spot, remarks Canon Barthas, «in a few years they would begin building the great Basilica of Our Lady of Fatima, as though our shepherds had already laid the foundations.»²⁰⁵ At the very spot that Francisco was building, the first stone was laid, and it is also here that the body of Jacinta lies. “Locus iste sanctus est...” *Holy is this place.*

MAY 13 AND ITS CORRELATION WITH OTHER MARIAN THEMES. The choice of the date appears equally remarkable. Did not Our Lady choose a day that had already long been dedicated to Her? It was on May 13 that the Pope granted the request of John I, that in the “Land of Holy Mary” all its cathedrals would henceforth be dedicated to Her as to its Heavenly Patron.²⁰⁶

Moreover, May 13 was also a feast of Mary, and doubly so. On this date at Rome there was once celebrated an event of great symbolic importance. On May 13, 610, Pope Boniface IV had consecrated the ancient Pantheon (which for five centuries had been dedicated to all the gods of paganism)²⁰⁷ to the Mother of God and all the martyrs.

For some years May 13 had also been the feast of *Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament*, a devotion so dear to St. Julian Eymard and Pope St. Pius X, who authorized its celebration, and granted indulgences to a prayer in Her honour, as well as the invocation: “Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, pray for us!”²⁰⁸

Is it necessary to recall that, when the three seers felt themselves as though wrapped in God, they exclaimed: “O Most Holy Trinity, I adore You. My God, my God, *I love You in the Most Blessed Sacrament.*”? Did they receive then, by the mediation of Mary, some light on the Divine Eucharistic Presence? It is possible and the correlation would be even clearer.

THE CYCLE OF THE SIX APPARITIONS. «... here, for six months in succession, on the 13th day, at this same hour.» This leads us from May 13 to October 13, and also describes the cycle of apparitions between the two months dedicated to Our Lady, the month of May and the month of the Rosary. No doubt also it is this regularity, this precision of the heavenly rendezvous, which more than anything else favoured the increase in the crowds coming to the Cova da Iria. What firmness in this promise of Our Lady, by which all sincere and upright minds found themselves as though held in suspense until October 13... For the Blessed Virgin had added: «Then I will tell you who I am and what I want.»²⁰⁹

Therefore, after the apparition of October 13, the children had no hesitation in answering questions: «Will Our Lady appear again?»²¹⁰ Canon Formigao asked that very evening. And Lucy answered: «I do not expect Her to appear again...» Thus it is quite clear that the apparitions formed a unique and well-defined cycle.²¹¹ And yet, the Blessed Virgin had added another promise...

“AFTERWARDS, I WILL COME BACK HERE A SEVENTH TIME.” This last sentence, long omitted by historians,²¹² no doubt because of its mysterious character, remains for us uncertain in meaning to this day.

In 1946, during a brief stay at Fatima, Sister Lucy confided to Canon Galamba²¹³ that Our Lady had appeared to her at the Cova da Iria on June 16, 1921, when she stopped there early in the morning before leaving for the college of Vilar, at Porto. It was a silent apparition, solely to comfort the little seer on this day, when she believed she was leaving Aljustrel and the Cova da Iria forever.

Was this apparition the seventh one announced on May 13, 1917? Certain authors think so, and it is possible.²¹⁴ But has Sister Lucy affirmed it categorically? We do not know. While waiting for the decisive documents we cannot dismiss *a priori* the hypothesis of Father Martins dos Reis: «In spite of its material coincidence», he writes, «it is very doubtful that this seventh apparition, so strictly individual, corresponds to the seventh apparition promised on May 13,

1917. If we consider the first six, this promised seventh apparition seems to require and imply recipients and an audience of an equally general and collective character. We do not know what Lucy thinks of this, or even, as is most probable, whether she has concrete reasons for giving a judgment on this question...

«Is this promised apparition in relation with the third part of the secret?... When the whole mystery of Fatima shall be completed?»²¹⁵

According to this hypothesis, may we not hope that when all Her requests shall have been fully accomplished by the Holy Father and all the bishops of the world, Our Lady, full of kindness, will manifest Herself a seventh time in the Cova da Iria to mark the dawn of Her triumph?

THE VOCATION OF HEAVEN

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PROMISE. Once the heavenly rendezvous had been fixed, the dialogue continued again. And Lucy, with realism, immediately expresses the desire which imposes itself on her in the presence of the Queen of Heaven: to follow Her, to go there with Her! «And I», she asks, «shall I go to Heaven?» This sacred “egoism” uncovers the simplicity of a frank and loyal soul. How can we desire that others go to Heaven, if we do not first firmly desire to go ourselves?

Reassured, filled with joy by the marvellous promise which fell from the lips of Our Lady, «Yes, you shall!» the seer goes on boldly: «“And Jacinta?” “Yes.” “And Francisco?” “Yes, but he will have to say many Rosaries.”»²¹⁶

PURGATORY AND HEAVEN. «She shall be in purgatory until the end of the world.» Such a saddening answer on the part of the Blessed Virgin regarding the fate of Amelia, a young woman eighteen or twenty years old who had died shortly before, has caused a great deal of ink to flow. First of all, although this phrase has often been omitted or replaced by vague circumlocutions, it is surely authentic. If, in her first writing of 1922, Lucy writes only, «she is in purgatory», it is, as we can easily understand, out of regard for the family. But with the passing of time, she no longer hesitated to relate this phrase of Our Lady in its integral sense. In 1946, she confirmed this sense in its exactitude to Father Jongen.

Certainly it is a hard saying to hear, but it could not be clearer. There is no reason to water down its obvious significance. The literal sense of «until the end of the world» is without any doubt the only possible one.²¹⁷

Father Martins dos Reis, who attempted to learn who this young girl was, tells us something which it is important to know: it is a certain fact that the poor Amelia died in circumstances involving «an irremediable dishonour in the matter of chastity».²¹⁸

What is certain is that Our Lady wanted us to know this for our instruction, and it would be foolish presumption to pretend to dispute the judgements of God. He alone, who intimately knows each soul, the abundance of graces He has given to it, the degree of knowledge it had of its fault and the quality of its repentance, is the judge of the gravity of sin.

And then for those who are astonished or scandalized by the rigour of such a judgement, it must be remembered that one must not confuse the sufferings of Purgatory with those of hell! «Purgatory and its fire are completely different», writes the Abbé de Nantes, along the lines of the most exact theology, such as the revelations of a St. Catherine of Genoa and other saints. «*It is with an intense joy, an ardent satisfaction*, that the souls in this place of passage suffer the pains which dispose them from day to day (or, alas, from year to year) to finally enter into the eternity of the blessed life of the elect. They are certain to see Jesus again, to see Mary again, and no longer to be separated from them, *so that the sharp flames of fire that purify them are sweet to them.*»²¹⁹ Purgatory is the gate to Heaven, where beatitude without measure will last always, forever...

See the way our mind works! We think only of Amelia's lot, while forgetting the consoling response of Our Lady concerning the little Maria das Neves, this other young girl of Aljustrel, who had died shortly before, and whom Our Lady declares is already in Heaven! To us that seems to go without saying, as though it were the most normal thing in the world... What blindness! As though going to Heaven – and right away, without suffering anything – was for men a right which God must satisfy! Let us realize to what extent the ideology of the Rights of Man, which insinuates itself everywhere, risks poisoning our own faith! We should rather be astonished at and admire the Mercy of God, which thus introduces into the infinite beatitude of His Trinitarian Life – and for eternity! – this humble child, who no doubt was not a heroine or a great saint, but contented herself quite simply with being a good girl and a good Christian!

Thus the twofold revelation of Our Lady on the very different lot of these two souls could have only one precise intention: to arouse the fear of the punishments of God in careless or hardened sinners, always so prompt in finding excuses, and to increase in humble and faithful souls the desire to persevere in a holy life.

THE VOCATION OF SUFFERING

«I do not promise to make you happy in this world, only in the next», the Immaculate One had said to Bernadette. Similarly at Fatima, after promising Heaven to the three privileged ones, the Blessed Virgin immediately offered them what is inseparable from it: suffering. *Per crucem ad lucem*. It is the royal road of the Cross which leads to the Light.

THE CHILDREN OFFER THEMSELVES TO GOD AS VICTIM SOULS. Already in 1916, at the well of Arneiro, the Angel had invited them to offer to God their sacrifices unceasingly. «And especially», he had concluded, «accept and bear with submission the sufferings which the Lord will send you.» Today Our Lady asks them to do much more: «Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for all the sins by which He is offended and of supplication for the conversion of sinners?» «Yes, we are.» This definite “yes” that Lucy pronounced at that instant, in the name of all three, was nothing less than an oblation to God as a victim of love, love for God in reparation for sin, to console His wounded Heart. Love for souls also, to obtain at any price their conversion. Showing a great sense of supernatural understanding, the three seers decided to say nothing to anyone about this oblation they had made.²²⁰

“THEN YOU WILL HAVE MUCH TO SUFFER”, Our Lady added. For this is the law of sacrifice: there is no oblation acceptable to God without immolation.

The promise was not long in being fulfilled, and it is due to the apparition that Lucy first of all, and then Jacinta and Francisco, who shared her sentiments more and more intimately, would have to suffer cruelly. Here is Lucy’s own account, for this is the best commentary on the message:

«In the meantime, news of what had happened was spreading. My mother was getting worried, and wanted at all costs to make me deny what I had

said. One day, before I set out with the flock, she was determined to make me confess that I was telling lies, and to this end she spared neither caresses, nor threats, nor even the broomstick. To all this she received nothing but a mute silence, or the confirmation of all that I had already said. She told me to go and let out the sheep, and during the day to consider well that she had never tolerated a single lie among her children, and much less would she allow a lie of this kind. She warned me that she would force me, that very evening, to go to those people that I had deceived, confess that I had lied and ask their pardon.

I went off with my sheep, and that day my little companions were already waiting for me. When they saw me crying, they ran up and asked me what was the matter. I told them all that had happened, and added: “Tell me now, what am I to do? My mother is determined at all costs to make me say that I was lying. But how can I?” Then Francisco said to Jacinta: “You see! It’s all your fault. Why did you have to tell them?” The poor child, in tears, knelt down, joined her hands, and asked our forgiveness. “I did wrong”, she said through her tears, “but I will never tell anything to anybody again.”»²²¹

As word continued to spread, which only drew down on Lucy and her mother scorn and sarcasm, the latter went, a few days later, to open her heart to the parish priest of Fatima:

«“Such misfortunes, happening only to us!” “But how is that a misfortune?” “It is, she is making us the laughing stock of the whole country!” “But if what she says is true, it would be a great blessing, and the whole world would envy you.” “If it was true!... If it was true!... But that cannot be... It is my daughter who is lying... It is the first time, but I will teach her not to start again.”

«In fact, on their return to the house, she gave her daughter the promised lesson, striking her repeatedly.»²²²

THE PARISH PRIEST’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE APPARITIONS. At the end of May, Father Ferreira, who remained perplexed and on the whole indifferent, nevertheless thought it his duty to call the children to the presbytery to interrogate them. He did it very conscientiously, sticking to what was pertinent, and his written account remains one of the most important documents on the apparitions, both because of its earlier date – the parish priest of Fatima

transcribed his interrogations a few days after each apparition – as well as its cold objectivity.

Although Lucy willingly answered the questions of her parish priest, Jacinta would not open her mouth:

«She put her head down and only with difficulty did he succeed in getting a word or two out of her. Once outside, I asked her: “Why didn’t you answer the priest?” “Because I promised you never to tell anything to anybody again!”»²²³

Poor child! Let us not forget that she was only seven years old!

No doubt Father Marques Ferreira did not have a good impression. Although pious and zealous, it seems that, even before the apparitions, he had never shown any great attention or affection for our three shepherds. Lucy, as is obvious from reading her Memoirs, bitterly regretted losing the good and paternal Father Pena, who had had to leave the parish in 1913. Father Ferreira had arrived at Fatima a few months after her First Communion. No doubt he did not appreciate this extraordinary favour granted by his predecessor to a six-year-old child. It was so contrary to his principles, he who did not wish to hear of First Communion before the age of nine or ten!

What is certain is that Father Ferreira, who had not been able to gain the confidence of the seers, took offence when they would not open their souls to him, and he grew colder and colder towards them. True, his task was anything but easy. But it seems that, instead of biding his time in an attitude of prudent expectation, objectivity and apparent indifference, he quickly came to be dominated by a certain animosity with regard to the seers and to Ti Marto, who refused to admit that his children were liars...

The attitude of the parish priest of Fatima, as we will see, remains enigmatic, quite different from that of Father Peyramale of Lourdes, who was prudent, suspicious, and awe-inspiring in appearance, but a man with a great heart, well disposed to believe, once he had convincing proof of the reality of the apparitions.

Be that as it may, the days following the visit to the parish priest were a real martyrdom for Lucy. Since Father Ferreira did not approve, there was only one

solution for Maria Rosa: her daughter was a liar.

«I was overwhelmed with bitterness», writes Sister Lucy. «I could see that my mother was deeply distressed, and that she wanted at all costs to compel me, as she put it, to admit that I had lied. I wanted so much to do as she wished, but the only way I could do so was to tell a lie. From the cradle, she had instilled into her children a great horror of lying, and she used to chastise severely any one of us who told an untruth.

«“I’ve seen to it”, she often said, “that my children always told the truth, and am I now to let the youngest get away with a thing like this? If it were just a small thing...! But a lie of such proportions, deceiving so many people!...”

«After these bitter complaints, she would turn to me, saying: “Make up your mind which you want! Either undo all this deception by telling these people that you’ve lied, or I’ll lock you up in a dark room where you won’t even see the light of the sun. *After all the things I’ve been through, and now a thing like this to happen!*”²²⁴

«My sisters sided with my mother, and all around me the atmosphere was one of utter scorn and contempt. Then I would remember the old days, and ask myself: “Where is all that affection now, that my family had for me just such a short while ago?” My one relief was to weep before the Lord, as I offered Him my sacrifice.»²²⁵

«You will have much to suffer», the Blessed Virgin had announced, «but the Grace of God will be your comfort», She had added. And without waiting any further, She had immediately filled them with an incomparable mystical favour, a sort of vision of God, which alone could give them the strength to bear the harsh sufferings which awaited them. In the same way Jesus had led His three favoured disciples to Tabor, to prepare them for Calvary.

THE VISION IN GOD

«As she pronounced these last words, “the grace of God will be your comfort”, Our Lady opened Her hands for the first time, communicating to us a light so intense that, as it streamed from Her hands, its rays penetrated

our hearts and the innermost depths of our souls, making us see ourselves in God, Who was that light, better than we see ourselves in the best of mirrors.»

A mysterious, astonishing vision, with great theological import, to which we must return later, for it manifests in a striking fashion the universal Mediation of Mary to whom it is given, by an unsearchable grace, to introduce souls into the Light of God. In the great and awesome theophany of the Book of Habakkuk, one verse applies to our apparition to the letter: «His brightness was like the light, *rays flashed from His hand*, and there He veiled His power.» (Hab. 3:4) But here, it is the Immaculate One who flashes forth the light and power of God! Three times more, the little seers will contemplate this astonishing spectacle, which reminds us of the apparition of the “Virgin with the rays”, at rue du Bac. In this way opening Her hands, which at first had been joined in an attitude of prayer, in a symbolic and solemn gesture as She had done at Lourdes and Pontmain, the Blessed Virgin wishes to teach us Her role as Mediatrix of all graces.²²⁶

«Then, moved by an inner impulse that was also communicated to us, we fell on our knees, repeating in our hearts: “O Most Holy Trinity, I adore You! My God, my God, I love You in the most Blessed Sacrament!”»

Of this mysterious vision by which Mary immersed them in God, the children, of course, said nothing. What could they say about it? Moreover, writes Sister Lucy, although seeing the Blessed Virgin filled them with an expansive joy, «however, with regard to the light communicated to us when Our Lady opened Her hands, and everything connected with this light, we experienced a kind of inner impulse that compelled us to keep silent.»²²⁷

In 1936, in a letter to her confessor, Father Gonçalves, Sister Lucy, commenting on this vision writes: «We fell on our knees. It inspired us with so great a knowledge of God that it is not easy to speak about it.»²²⁸

THE GREAT SORROW OF GOD. However, what really made an impression on the seers in this exalted supernatural communication, was the sorrow of God, especially Francisco. This recollection would become a dominant thought with the young shepherd:

«I loved seeing the Angel. I loved still more seeing Our Lady. What I loved

most of all was to see Our Lord in that light from Our Lady which penetrated our hearts. I love God so much! *But He is very sad because of so many sins!* We must never commit any sins again.»²²⁹

Let us quote once again this text, so touching in its childlike candour, and so filled with supernatural life:

«When we arrived at the place for pasturing our sheep a few days after Our Lady's first apparition, he climbed up to the top of a steep rock, and called out to us: "Don't come up here; let me stay here alone." "All right." And off I went, chasing butterflies with Jacinta. We no sooner caught them than we made the sacrifice of letting them fly away, and we never gave another thought to Francisco.

«When lunchtime came, we missed him and went to call him: "Francisco, don't you want to come for your lunch?" "No, you eat." "And to pray the Rosary?" "That, yes, later on. Call me again."

«When I went to call him again, he said to me: "You come up here and pray with me." We climbed up to the peak, where the three of us could scarcely find room to kneel down, and I asked him: "But what have you been doing all this time?" "*I am thinking about God, Who is so sad because of so many sins! If only I could give Him joy!*"

«One day, we began to sing in happy chorus about the joys of the Serra... We sang it right through once, and were about to repeat it, when Francisco interrupted us: "Let's not sing any more. Since we saw the Angel and Our Lady singing doesn't appeal to me any longer."»²³⁰

This shows us how seriously Francisco, who was only nine years old, took the message of the Blessed Virgin.

«*REGINA PACIS, ORA PRO NOBIS*»

«After a few moments Our Lady added: "Pray the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war."» These last words, which She would repeat in almost the same terms on July 13, September 13 and October 13, constitute one of the major themes of the message of Fatima, to which we shall return.

Let us point out here a new, astonishing coincidence. Spring of 1917: France was reeling from the frightening disasters of the foolish Nivelle offensive. During this time, «on April 21, the first contingent of the Portuguese army of General Tamagnini Abreu had begun to embark, and on the 24th it arrived at Brest. The embarkments continued at an accelerated rate, and soon 40,000 men were dispatched from Cherbourg, Le Havre, Calais and Boulogne towards Lys, Lillers and Bethune, where they took up their position among the English, Scotch, Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders. On May 10 they arrived at Aire-sur-la-Lys and on May 13 they were in the fighting lines.²³¹ The very day that Portugal effectively entered into the war, Our Lady came to announce peace and to indicate to the good people the efficacious weapon for obtaining it quickly: daily recitation of the Rosary. But the Blessed Virgin was not the first to propose this remedy...

Indeed – and here is another even more remarkable sign – on Saturday, May 5, 1917, Pope Benedict XV, seeing the near uselessness of all his attempts to bring an end to the horrible world conflict, decided to insistently and solemnly invite the whole Christian people to entrust the obtaining of peace to the Blessed Virgin Mary:

«Since by a loving design of Divine Providence, *all graces* that the Author of all good deigns to grant to the poor children of Adam *are dispensed through the hands of the most Holy Virgin*, we wish that, in this dreadful hour, with lively confidence Her most afflicted children turn to Her with their requests. In consequence, we charge you, Eminence (the letter is addressed to Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State), to make known to the entire episcopate our ardent desire *that all have recourse to the Heart of Jesus, throne of graces, and that they have recourse by the mediation of Mary*. To this end we order that, beginning with the first day of June, there be permanently added to the Litany of Loreto the invocation: “Queen of Peace, pray for us.”²³²

At Fatima, eight days later, the Blessed Virgin came to confirm these words of the Vicar of Christ: yes, She is indeed the Mediatrix of all graces, and the gift of peace for the nations comes through Her Queenly power. But this favour which She can grant as Sovereign, She wishes to give only in response to our prayer, in response to the daily and fervent recitation of the Rosary. «Queen of Peace, pray for us!» This little invocation, added to the Litany by the Pope evokes one of the

three essential themes of the secret of Fatima: God will only grant true peace to our twentieth century in response to an intense and solemn devotion to His Immaculate Mother.

One last coincidence by which God apparently willed to stress even more the importance of May 13, 1917: at the very hour that Mary was appearing in the Cova da Iria, in the Sistine Chapel the Holy Father was conferring episcopal consecration on a young prelate, Msgr. Pacelli... the future Pius XII, to whom it would fall later on to put into practice the great message of Our Lady of Fatima.

QUEEN ASSUMED INTO HEAVEN

After Her last words on the Rosary, on war and peace, which allow us to see the national and worldwide dimension of Her message, Our Lady, Lucy recalls, «began to rise slowly in the direction of the east, until She finally disappeared in the immensity of Heaven. She went up so high that She could no longer be seen.»²³³ But Her radiant image remained fixed in the hearts of the three seers, who for the next month, as they awaited Her next visit, would live in the ardent desire of seeing Her again...

III. «TOTA PULCHRA ES, O MARIA!»

«Thou art all beautiful, O Mary!» our liturgy chants. This was also what Jacinta kept repeating uncontrollably, after her contemplation of the Heavenly Vision: «Oh, what a beautiful Lady! Oh, what a beautiful Lady!» she repeated unceasingly!

So beautiful that all images, all statues of the apparition disappoint Sister Lucy, for as she wrote to her bishop, Msgr. da Silva, «it is impossible to depict Her as She really is, and we cannot even describe Her with words of this earth.»²³⁴

However, we shall not resign ourselves to silence, and far from sharing the lack of interest that Dom Jean-Nesmy shows for the descriptions of the apparition,²³⁵ as clumsy as they are, these descriptions are of the highest interest to us. Is it not, in fact, the glorious body of the Immaculate Virgin that the little seers had the privilege of contemplating? And this risen body, this “spiritual body”, as St. Paul says, is it not the pure sensible expression of the very mystery of Her person?

Seen in the light of the liturgy of the Church and the symbolism of Scripture, all these details concerning the appearance of the Vision seem to us to contain great riches for mystical theology; we will find there a precious aid for the contemplation of the mysteries of Mary.

«WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE...»

«How old did Our Lady seem to be?» Canon Formigao asked Lucy.²³⁶ «She seemed to be around fifteen», Lucy answered. In the diocesan process, the seer, no doubt influenced by various remarks made to her, corrected her first estimate and declared that the apparition seemed to be more than eighteen years old. That still does not change the fact that, as in the case of Bernadette, the Blessed Virgin appeared very young to the three shepherds of Aljustrel. This astonishing youth evokes one aspect of Her mystery: is She not the Immaculate, «without stain or wrinkle», «the eternal Daughter of the Heavenly Father»?

Again, as at Lourdes, She appeared small, very small, scarcely five feet tall, Lucy said. This littleness also has its meaning, it says something to us. We might think of the beautiful responsory of Matins of Her feast, which sings of Her humility: *Cum essem parvula, placui Altissimo... When I was a little one, I pleased the Most High, and in My womb I brought forth God made man!*

Young and quite small, the Queen of Heaven also came very close to Her three children. For a pedestal She had chosen a little holm oak, about a metre high. «We were so close», writes Lucy, «that we found ourselves in the light surrounding Her, or rather emanating from Her, about a metre and a half away, more or less.» We are reminded of the Transfiguration, and of Peter, James and John who were themselves taken into the cloud surrounding Jesus, Moses and Elijah.

During the following apparitions, when numerous witnesses would be alongside the seers, Lucy notes that she never saw Our Lady look at the crowd; and Francisco said: «She looks at all three of us, but She looks the longest at Lucy.» When She speaks, «Her voice is soft and pleasant.»²³⁷

«A WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN»

But when it comes to describing the apparition, as well as the Angel, the word that keeps recurring is light, a light brighter than the sun. For it was indeed «the humble handmaid of the Lord» who manifested Herself at Fatima, and She also appeared in the brilliant glory with which God has willed to crown Her humility.

Already to Canon Formigao, on October 11, 1917, Lucy explained: «the light that surrounds Her is more beautiful than the light of the sun, and more brilliant.» «What was brighter, the sun or the countenance of Our Lady?» the Canon asked. And Francisco answered: «The countenance of Our Lady was brighter, and Our Lady was all white.»²³⁸ In the Memoirs, it is always the same expression we find on the pen of Sister Lucy: «*We saw a Lady all dressed in white, more brilliant than the sun...*»

Another notable and surprising thing is that right after the apparitions, the seers said that the Blessed Virgin was so sparkling that Her light dazzled them. «Why do you often lower your eyes and stop looking at Our Lady?» asked Canon Formigao. «*Because sometimes She blinds me*»,²³⁹ Lucy answered. And on October 13: «She came in the midst of a great light. Again this time She blinded me. From time to time I had to rub my eyes.»²⁴⁰

A GLORIOUS BODY. In short, it was Her risen body in all the splendour of its glory in which She manifested Herself at the Cova da Iria. Once again, there is perfect agreement between the testimony of the three shepherds and that of Holy Scripture. The evangelist writes of the transfigured Jesus: «His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light.» (Mt. 17:2) In the great vision of the glorious Christ which opens the Apocalypse, Jesus appears to the Disciple «as a Son of man», whose face was «like the sun shining at full strength». (Apoc. 1:16) When he throws Saul down to the ground on the road to Damascus, it is once again in the same light. «At midday», the Apostle relates, «I saw on my way a light from Heaven, brighter than the sun, shining round me and those who journeyed with me.» (Acts 26:13) The light was so bright that he lost his sight: «And when I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.» (Acts 22:11)

The sun is only the image of the divine light with which the risen Bodies of Jesus and Mary shine. It was thus that the Virgin appeared at Fatima, like the Spouse in the Canticle of Canticles, «*fair as the moon, bright as the sun*» (Cant. 6:10), and also like the Woman of the Apocalypse, «*a woman clothed with the*

sun». (Apoc. 12:1) By Her apparitions at the Cova da Iria, the Blessed Virgin confirms for us, that as Mother of the “Sun of Justice”, She has been clothed with the divine Light since Her Assumption. While remaining a creature and fully human, She has penetrated, so to speak, into the sphere of the divinity.

«*HE HAS CLOTHED ME WITH THE GARMENTS OF SALVATION...*»

Although «all shining with light», the Apparition nevertheless seemed to be, in the eyes of the seer, a real human person, of ineffable beauty: «The face, with infinitely pure and delicate lines, shines in an aureole of the sun... The eyes are black. The hands are joined on top of the breast. From the right hand there hangs a beautiful Rosary with white beads, brilliant as pearls, ending in a little cross of silver, which also sparkles. The feet... gently come down onto a little ermine cloud which comes over the green branches of the shrub.

«The dress, which is snow white, falls right down to the feet... A white veil (a veritable mantle), with edges adorned with fine braided gold, covers the head, the shoulders, and falling almost as low as the dress, envelops the whole body.»²⁴¹

Does not this description remind us of the beautiful verses of Isaiah which the liturgy, with lyrical joy, attributes to the Blessed Virgin on the morning of Her Immaculate Conception? «I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,» She chants, «and My soul shall be joyful in My God: *for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, and with the robe of justice He has covered Me, as a bride adorned with her jewels.*»²⁴² Is it not in this way that She appeared at the Cova da Iria? Clothed with a robe of light, «*induit me vestimentis salutis*», a symbol of the singular privilege by which She would benefit more than any other from the grace of salvation, since in view of the future merits of Her Son She was preserved from every stain of sin. Draped in a sparkling white mantle, resplendent in the golden flashes of light, She is the image of original justice rediscovered and restored in greater splendour: «*He has covered Me with the robe of justice...*»

Such is indeed the spirit of the liturgy of December 8, as it pursues its joyful chant...

“AS A BRIDE ADORNED WITH HER JEWELS...” These last words attributed

by the Church to the Immaculate One, do they not also apply to the Virgin of Fatima, who appeared all clothed in light and adorned with ornaments even more sparkling?

For the Rosary «with beads as brilliant as pearls», and the border of golden light on the great veil She wore, as a virgin consecrated to God, were not Her only adornments: «You can see, in the front (of the dress)», Lucy declared on September 27, 1917, «two gold cords which fall from the neck and are joined at the waist by a tassel, also gold.»²⁴³ Originally the seer was misunderstood, and it was thought that it was a tassel with long fringes. In this way it was represented by Jose Ferreira Thedim, sculptor of the first statue which is still venerated today in the little chapel of the apparitions.

In fact, it was a ball of light suspended from the neck of Our Lady by a chain descending right down to the cincture. In her first written account of 1922, Lucy wrote clearly: «*At the neck She had a necklace with a ball that went down to Her waist.*»²⁴⁴

What can the significance of this mysterious ball be? Some have seen in it the symbol of the terrestrial globe, as in the apparition of rue du Bac. But to Catherine Labouré, Our Lady had explained the meaning of this «golden ball, with a little cross mounted on top», which She held in Her hands, as if to offer to God: «This ball which you see», She had said, «represents the whole world, especially France, and every person in particular.»²⁴⁵ The symbolism was clear.

At Fatima on the other hand, neither the Blessed Virgin nor the seer has given the significance of this mysterious ball of light. Our Lady did not hold it in Her hands, nor did She illumine it with Her rays of light, as with the terrestrial globe. On the contrary, this «ball of light», suspended from Her neck by a golden chain, is even more sparkling than the rest of Her luminous body.

In this case, is it not better to keep closer to the description that has been given to us, and believe that it is *an ornament*, a “necklace”, as Lucy says? No doubt this idea was discarded because it seemed unfitting...

However, in the light of the liturgy, itself completely saturated with Holy Scripture, it seems to us that we can easily guess the symbolic meaning of this ornament. Does it not remind us of the “jewels”, the traditional attribute of the spouse? *Sicut sponsam ornatam monilibus suis* – «As a bride adorned with her

jewels», continues the canticle of Isaiah, which the Church places on the lips of the Immaculate One. Is not this identification of the Blessed Virgin with the spouse in the Canticle of Canticles one of the most constantly recurring themes of the liturgy in Her honour?

Is it not in this sense that we must look for the most profound significance of this mysterious jewel described by Lucy? Several verses of the Canticle seem to invite us to do so: thus the divine Spouse speaking to the Bride, the figure of Israel and of the Church, personified in the Blessed Virgin: «You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes, *with one jewel of your necklace*. How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride!» (Cant. 4:9-10) There is also this other verse, rich in Biblical allusions, again in the words of the divine Spouse to the Bride: «Your cheeks are comely with ornaments, *your neck with strings of jewels*. We will make you *ornaments of gold*, studded with silver.» (Cant. 1:10)²⁴⁶

Does not this verse at the same time shed light on a second difficulty concerning the description of the apparition? In fact, there was one declaration of Lucy that caused embarrassment for the commentators: «And what does She wear on the ears?» Canon Formigao had asked Francisco. «You cannot see Her ears», he answered, «because they are covered by the mantle.» Jacinta had also said the same thing. Lucy, however, answered the same question: «Yes, *She has two earrings*.»²⁴⁷ We know that Lucy, in her Memoirs, wanted to eliminate this apparent contradiction between her initial testimony and that of her cousins by explaining that what she had seen was only a reflection of light, «which momentarily gave the impression of small earrings».²⁴⁸ The important thing is that there was no question of a material jewel here! However this did not prevent the luminous appearance of the vision from resembling this ornament. Thus it would be exaggerated to speak of a contradiction between Lucy and her cousins: she simply perceived a secondary detail that Jacinta and Francisco passed over in silence.²⁴⁹

Does not the silence of Our Lady, which furnished the seers with no explanation of these mysterious ornaments, reinforce our hypothesis? This silence would be badly explained if it concerned symbols having to do with the message (such as the globe of the earth in the rue du Bac apparition), but it seems perfectly comprehensible to us if it concerns symbolic ornaments of the spouse, the Blessed Virgin wishing in this way to discreetly suggest a hidden and sublime aspect of Her unique vocation.

We will understand the whole significance of these comparisons later on, when we place them in a larger context... For it is in the end to the Virgin of the Apocalypse that we must refer all these allusions to the Spouse in the Cantic of Canticles. In this we can see a delicate sign of the care of the Mother of God, wishing to signify to Her children that She is indeed the “Catholic” Virgin, of whom they sing with love when they offer praises in Her honour: She is the Immaculate Conception, the Holy Spouse of the Word of God, the living Sanctuary of the Spirit of Love and of Light. She is the perfect figure and personification of the Church, the Virgin who has risen up to Heaven in glory, in body and soul. She is the Queen of Heaven and earth, who has already been introduced into the great Light of God.

APPENDIX

«SHE WAS ALL OF LIGHT»

Father McGlynn, who was entrusted with sculpting the statue of Our Lady destined for the facade of the basilica at Fatima, had the privilege of interrogating Sister Lucy at length, and benefiting from her directions and counsels. He left us a precious report from which we take a few excerpts: «She described Our Lady as being “all of light”. The dress and the mantle could be distinguished from each other like two “undulations of light”, one over the other. The dress fell straight down and was not precisely in pleats. Lucy was so insistent that the poor sculptor had to make folds which had nothing “realistic” about them; they were to give the idea of light in vibration...

«Thus the gold bordering the mantle was simply a line of more intense light; thus also the chain suspended from the neck and held together by a “ball of light”, and what she had called “earrings” when still a child were simply a form of more intense light.

«Father McGlynn thought he might confuse her by asking: “Did the hands have the colour of flesh or the colour of light?” He was himself “flabbergasted” when she answered: “a flesh-coloured light (carnea luz). She was all light. This light had different tones: yellow, white and other nuances. By these different tones and intensities one could distinguish the hands from the dress.”

«She could not remember how many rays the star had, but like the chain it was

yellow and not gold; nor could she remember if the Lady had shoes or sandals:
“I don’t think I ever saw Her feet.”²⁵⁰

«However, she was very clear on anything having to do with Her posture. Her first remark, on seeing Father’s original design, was: “This does not give Her true posture.” She had him modify the position of the hands, the star, the ball of light by fractions of an inch; she asked him to make the mouth smaller and place it up higher.»²⁵¹

CHAPTER V

THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY PIERCED WITH THORNS (WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13)

I. THE EVENTS

THE FESTIVAL AT THE VILLAGE

«The 13th of June, feast of St. Anthony, was always a day of great festivities in our parish», Lucy relates. «My mother and my sisters, who knew how much I loved a festival, kept saying to me: “We’ll see if you’ll leave the festival just to go to the Cova da Iria, and talk to that Lady!”»²⁵² Indeed the feast was one of the most solemn: was not the Saint at the same time national Patron of Portugal and Patron of the parish?²⁵³

In Fatima on that day, «Mass was sung in honour of the great patron, and there was also a sermon and a procession. Youths and girls, then as now, prepared for the festivities which the saint was expected to patronise. The bells rang and alms and food were distributed. Fathers of families drove ox-carts decorated with branches of trees, flowers, flags and bedspreads, carrying wife and children to the festival, where some 500 people would be rewarded with free meals. They passed round the church several times and then stopped in front of the veranda where the priest gave his blessing.»²⁵⁴

What an attraction for the children! But for our three seers the question did not even arise: it was all decided; since they had promised Our Lady, they would go to the Cova da Iria! Only the prohibition of their parents could have prevented them. But this order did not come, because the parish priest had counselled them, very wisely, to leave the children free to do as they wished.

Jacinta desired very much that her mother accompany her. «Oh, mother», she kept saying, «come with us tomorrow to see Our Lady!» But on the morning of the 13th, when the little child woke up, her older brother told her that their parents had already left, and would not be back until evening. Not knowing what to do, Ti Marto had found an escape. Not daring to go to the Cova da Iria, and to

avoid taking part in the festival, he decided to go with his wife to Pedreira to buy some oxen. «When we get back», he told Olimpia, «this affair of the children will be finished with. What a business it is to be sure!»²⁵⁵

In haste our three shepherds led their flock to the Valinhos, for the grass was abundant there, and they could return more quickly to their house, in a little more than an hour. «On the day itself, nobody said a single word to me», writes Lucy. «Insofar as I was concerned, they acted as if they were saying, “Leave her alone, and we’ll soon see what she’ll do!”»²⁵⁶

After mature reflection, Maria Rosa had decided that if, in spite of the festival, the children were to go to the Cova da Iria, she would follow them, hide, and see what happened. If nothing extraordinary occurred and anyone attacked them, she would intervene, especially as the parents of the younger two had gone off for the day. True, she risked making a fool of herself. But too bad! «I’ll start for the church», she whispered to her eldest daughter, «and you stay here and tell me what happens.»²⁵⁷ This indeed was the wisest and most courageous solution.

No sooner had she gotten half-way to the church when she encountered five or six people from a neighbouring hamlet who asked to see «the children who had seen Our Lady». Then Maria Rosa lost her nerve: «There are more and more people going to the Cova da Iria», she told herself. «I won’t be able to get there without somebody seeing me. Somebody is sure to notice. These people look respectable. Well, we must see... and may God’s will be done. I shan’t leave here.»²⁵⁸ «The fear of being the laughing-stock of everybody was her weakness», Dom Jean-Nesmy justly comments.²⁵⁹ So she went off to the village for the festival.

Meanwhile Lucy also went in the direction of Fatima... But it was to lead a group of friends who with her made a solemn communion. She succeeded so well in this that more than a dozen children preferred to follow her rather than remain at the festival. Around eleven o’clock, with Jacinta and Francisco they arrived at the place of the apparitions.

THE WAIT AT THE COVA DA IRIA

Already several dozen persons were present, who had come from neighbouring hamlets for the most part, and some of them even from Torres Novas, more than

sixty miles away. From the parish there was hardly anyone except Maria Carreira, a believer from the very beginning, whom we shall hear so much about later on. Father De Marchi, to whom she freely confided, quotes at length her recollections, which are always of the highest interest by their charming simplicity and their great precision.

«I had always been sick», she relates, «and seven years previous I had been given up on by the doctors. They gave me only a short time to live.» She had barely heard of the apparitions when she became interested in them, went to Aljustrel to interrogate the seers, was impressed with them, and believed the truth of what they had said. She also decided to be present on June 13 at the Cova da Iria.

«My husband showed me where the place in question was, and he added: “You want to go there? Don’t be a fool! Do you think you’ll see Her?” “I know very well I won’t see Her”, I answered. “But if somebody said that the King were going by, nobody would stay at home, everybody would go out looking for him. And they say that Our Lady is coming there, and we shall not make any effort to go see Her?”

«As I had made my decision, I would not have missed June 13 at the Cova da Iria for anything in the world. On the evening before I said to my children: “What if we don’t go to the festival of St. Anthony tomorrow but to the Cova da Iria instead?” “What for?” they answered. “No, we’d rather go to the festival.” Then I turned to my crippled boy, John. “Do you want to go to the festival or with me?” “With you, mother”, he said. So on the following day, before the others started for the festival, I came here with my John, who hobbled along on a stick.»²⁶⁰

As we shall see later on, there was nothing in this lady that savoured of fanaticism, or a perpetual quest of the miraculous... quite the contrary. A woman of heroic courage, and great common sense, it was her profound faith and her love for the Most Holy Virgin which, not without a special grace from God, made her sense almost immediately that there was an authentic supernatural fact, and later on verify it with her own eyes.

When Lucy had arrived, Maria Carreira hastened to ask her:

«“Which is the oak tree where Our Lady appeared?” “This one”, she said,

putting her hand on it. It was a holm oak about a metre high, a nice strong sapling. It was very well shaped with regular branches.»²⁶¹

And then, without any excitement or disturbance, they awaited the hour of the apparition. As it was very hot, the little seers and their companions moved back a little bit to be in the shade. They began to play.

«Those of us who had come a long way, continues Maria Carreira, began to eat lunch and to offer some to the children, who each accepted an orange, which, however, they didn't eat. I can still see the three of them with the oranges in their hands. Then a girl from Boleiros began to read aloud from a book of prayers which she had brought.

«As I was ill and feeling weak and tired, I asked Lucy if she thought Our Lady would be long in coming. "She won't be long now", was her reply, and she watched for the signs of the arrival. We said the Rosary meanwhile and when the girl from Boleiros was beginning the Litany, Lucy interrupted, saying there would not be time.»²⁶²

Then, another witness relates, «Lucy got up, and arranged her shawl, the kerchief covering her head, as well as her other clothes, as if she were getting ready to go into church, and she turned towards the east, awaiting the vision.»²⁶³

«Suddenly she got up and called out: "Jacinta, Our Lady must be coming; there's the lightning!" They all ran to the holm oak and we behind them. We knelt down on the rocks and stones. Lucy lifted up her hands as if she were praying and I heard her say: "Your Grace asked me to come here; please tell me what you want."»²⁶⁴

There were now a good fifty people around the seers, grouped near the holm oak. Their word alone was responsible for the three or four thousand present on July 13... But now we must let Lucy speak. The account is taken from her fourth Memoir.

THE APPARITION: THE REVELATION OF THE IMMACULATE HEART

«June 13, 1917. As soon as Jacinta, Francisco and I had finished praying the Rosary with a number of other people who were present, we saw once

more the flash reflecting the light which was approaching (which we called lightning). The next moment, Our Lady was there on the holm oak, exactly the same as in May.»

THE THREE REQUESTS OF OUR LADY.

— *What does Your Grace want of me? I asked.*

— ***I wish you to come here on the 13th of next month, to pray the Rosary each day, and to learn how to read. Later, I will tell you what I want.***

I asked for the cure of a sick person.

— ***If he is converted, he will be healed during the year.***

[«THE HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY HAVE DESIGNS OF MERCY ON YOU.»

— *I would like to ask you to take us to Heaven.*

— ***Yes, I will take Jacinta and Francisco soon. But you are to stay here some time longer. Jesus wishes to make use of you to make Me known and loved. He wants to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart.***²⁶⁵ ***To whoever embraces this devotion I promise salvation; these souls shall be dear to God, as flowers placed by Me to adorn His throne.***²⁶⁶

— *Am I to stay here alone? I asked, sadly.*

— ***No, My daughter. Do you suffer a great deal? Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.***

THE VISION IN GOD. «As Our Lady spoke these last words, She opened Her hands and for the second time, She communicated to us the rays of that immense light. We saw ourselves in this light, as it were, immersed in God. Jacinta and Francisco seemed to be in that part of the light which rose towards Heaven, and I in that which was poured out on the earth.»

THE GREAT REVELATION OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF

MARY. «In front of the palm of Our Lady's right hand was a heart encircled by thorns which pierced it. We understood that this was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, outraged by the sins of humanity and seeking reparation.»]

THE LITTLE SECRET OF JUNE 13. «You know now, Your Excellency, what we referred to when we said that Our Lady had revealed a secret to us in June. At the time, Our Lady did not tell us to keep it secret, but we felt moved to do so by God.»²⁶⁷

THE MARVELLOUS SIGNS²⁶⁸

Around noon, everyone heard Lucy suddenly cry: «Here is the lightning!... Our Lady will arrive!» But only the three children had seen it.²⁶⁹ The others saw neither the lightning, nor Our Lady...

Manuel Gonçalves, a young peasant, thirty years old, from the hamlet of Montelo, was present. An intelligent man with great common sense, he would be interrogated at length, on October 11, 1917, by Canon Formigao. «When Lucy speaks to Our Lady», he explained, «she speaks loudly. I myself heard her in June because I was near her. Some people say that they heard the sound of the reply.»²⁷⁰

AN UNUSUAL MURMUR. Indeed, Maria Carreira and other witnesses relate that between the words of Lucy, they heard something like the murmur of a very fine, but unintelligible voice.²⁷¹

Let us pay attention to the account of our peasant, Maria Carreira, who better than anyone else was able to observe and relate with precision what she had seen and heard: «Then (after Lucy had begun to speak to Our Lady), we began to hear something *like the sound of a very faint voice; but we could not understand what it was saying; it was like the buzzing of a bee.*»²⁷² On July 13, Ti Marto also declared that he had perceived this slight noise which he was not able to describe very well.

«During the vision», another witness notes, «the branches of the tree were bent down all around it, as though the weight of Our Lady were really resting on it.»²⁷³

However, it was especially at the end of the apparition that the most astonishing signs took place, as if the Blessed Virgin, in Her goodness, had willed to give these good people who had come to see Her some reflections of the apparition, as a certain pledge of Her invisible presence in the midst of them.

«IT SOUNDED SOMEWHAT LIKE A ROCKET.» «When Our Lady left the tree», Maria Carreira relates, «it sounded somewhat like a rocket, a long way off, as it goes up. Lucy got up very quickly, and with her arm outstretched cried, “Look, there She goes! There She goes!”»²⁷⁴

«THE BRANCHES LEANED TOWARDS THE EAST.» «I noticed an astonishing fact», another witness relates. «We were in the month of June and the tree had all its boughs covered with little sprouts. Now at the end of the apparition, when Lucy announced that Our Lady was leaving in the direction of the east, all the branches of the tree picked up and leaned in the same direction, as if Our Lady, as She left, had let Her dress rest upon the boughs.»²⁷⁵

«A LITTLE CLOUD WENT UP TOWARDS THE EAST.» As for Maria Carreira, as she continues her account, she describes another phenomenon, as gracious as it is astonishing, which she noticed the moment Lucy declared: «Look! There She goes! There She goes!» It was «a little cloud... which went up gently in the direction of the east, until it finally disappeared completely. Certain people said: “I still see it; there it is...” until finally nobody claimed to see it. The little children remained silent, their eyes fixed on the same point in the sky, until finally Lucy declared: “There, now we can’t see Her any more. She has gone back into Heaven, the doors are shut!”»

«THE SHOOTS OF THE HOLM OAK... AS IF SOMEONE HAD STOOD UPON THEM.» «We then turned towards the miraculous tree and what was our admiration to see that the shoots at the top, which had been standing upright before, were now all bent towards the east, as if someone had stood upon them.»

AFTER THE APPARITION. «Then we began to pull off twigs and leaves from the top of the tree, but Lucy told us to take them from the bottom where Our Lady had not touched them... Somebody suggested that we should say the Rosary again before going home, but others who had come a long way said that we could say the Litany now and the Rosary on the way back to Fatima.

«After the Litany we all went back to Fatima with the children, praying as we

went, and we arrived as the procession was just starting. People saw us arrive and asked us where we had come from. We replied, from the Cova da Iria, and that we were very glad to have come from there. Some of them were sorry at what they had missed, but it was too late then.»²⁷⁶

Thus the first fifty pilgrims of June 13, as they returned to their homes full of joy and fervour, spread the good news everywhere: Yes, it was true, Our Lady had appeared a second time at the Cova da Iria! And it was not finished, She would come on the 13th of each month until October! So well did they communicate their enthusiastic confidence that right during the harvest season, on July 13, instead of a few dozen there were thousands present for the rendezvous...

II. A FIRST SECRET: THE REVELATION OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

«What did the Lady say this time?» the three seers were unceasingly asked. Jacinta, lowering her head, contented herself simply to repeat: «We must recite the Rosary every day. Our Lady will come back on the 13th of each month until October. Then She will say who She is and what She wants.»

However the questions became more pressing, and guessing very quickly that the seers had not said everything, the people asked them: «Our Lady said nothing else to you?» And then, so as not to lie, they were constrained to give an answer. «Since this apparition», Lucy writes, «we began to say... “Yes, She said something, but it is a secret.” If we were asked why it was a secret, we would shrug our shoulders, and lowering our heads, we would say nothing.»²⁷⁷

Indeed, during the apparition Our Lady had revealed many things of the greatest importance. However, they could not reveal them because they were all closely linked together. Being interiorly moved to keep silence, this is why they decided to say nothing of the great Message and the graces received that day. All the more so because these graces were all related to the mysterious vision they had had when, for the second time, Our Lady opened Her hands and communicated to them the «reflection of the immense light» emanating from Her.

THE IMMACULATE HEART, PIERCED WITH THORNS

In this light, they felt «as if submerged in God». It was a sublime vision: through the rays coming forth from the hands of Mary, they saw themselves submerged in God... and in the great light of God, it was given to them to contemplate the secret of Mary, to see Her pierced Heart. *«In front of the palm of Our Lady's right hand was a heart encircled by thorns which pierced it. We understood that this was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, outraged by the sins of humanity, and seeking reparation.»*²⁷⁸

Here we are at the very centre of the message of Fatima, at the heart of its Secret. This is why, to conform to the desire of Sister Lucy, we will devote a long chapter of our second volume to this revelation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.²⁷⁹ However, we can already relate the effect of the apparition in the soul of Francisco:

«He was very impressed by the reflection of light... At the time, he did not seem to understand what was happening, perhaps because it was not given to him to hear the accompanying words of Our Lady. For this reason, he asked later: “Why did Our Lady have a heart in Her hand, spreading out all over the world that great light which is God?”

«Sometimes he said: “These people are so happy just because you told them that Our Lady wants the Rosary said, and that you are to learn to read! How would they feel if they only knew what She showed to us in God, in Her Immaculate Heart, in that great light!”»²⁸⁰

The fruit of the vision for the three seers was an intimate knowledge and an ardent love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Lucy says that it was like an infused virtue which was granted to them that day:

«I think that, on that day, the main purpose of this light was to infuse within us a special knowledge and love for the Immaculate Heart of Mary, just as on the two other occasions it was intended to do, as it seems to me, with regard to God and the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. From that day onwards our hearts were filled with a more ardent love for the Immaculate Heart of Mary.»²⁸¹

Jacinta especially was overflowing with fervour: «From time to time she would say to me: “The Lady said that Her Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God. Don't you love that? Her Heart is so good!

How I love it!”»²⁸²

THE GREAT DESIGN OF GOD FOR THE WORLD

For the first time, without insisting, but already in all clarity, Our Lady revealed to the children the great project of the Heart of Jesus for our century: «Jesus wishes to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart. To whoever embraces this devotion, I promise salvation.» What marvellous, decisive words!

However the hour had not yet come when the great design of divine mercy was to be made known and the Will of God to be expressed openly to everybody. This was for the future, which in 1917 Our Lady wished only to prophesy and prepare for. For She had chosen Her instrument, Her messenger...

«*THE HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY HAVE DESIGNS OF MERCY ON YOU*»

These mysterious words, pronounced by the Angel in 1916 near the well, undoubtedly had not been understood by the three seers at the time. But with the passing of time, they came to be seen as a veiled announcement of what the Blessed Virgin, a year later, would come to reveal in all clarity: the designs of God over each of them and the broad outline of their future.

THE VOCATION OF JACINTA AND FRANCISCO. Since May 13, all three had but one and the same desire, which was energetically expressed by Francisco: «What I want is to go to Heaven!»²⁸³ But did they not already know they were going? They had received the promise, but this was not enough for them. What they desired now was to go to Heaven soon, without delay...²⁸⁴ Lucy quite ingenuously — but what perfection of soul it manifests! — requested it of Our Lady: «*I would like to ask you to take us to Heaven.*» And Our Lady answered: «Yes, Jacinta and Francisco, I will take them soon...» What an admirable response! It is the response of a sovereign: «*I will take them soon.*» Has not Her divine Son crowned Her as Queen and Gate of Heaven, *Janua coeli*, as the Litany says?

From then on their vocation is marked out. To be going to Heaven soon, what joy! But it was ; also a permanent stimulus in the pursuit of sanctity: there remained for them only a short time to repair for sins and console God, to pray

and offer sacrifices for the conversion of sinners. Hence they would apply themselves to it with all the more ardour.

Lucy relates for us a few recollections of the time from June-July 1917:

«From time to time Francisco would say: “Our Lady told us that we would have much to suffer, but I don’t mind. I’ll suffer all that She wishes! *What I want is to go to Heaven!*”

«One day, when I showed how unhappy I was over the persecution now beginning both in my family and outside, Francisco tried to encourage me with these words: “Never mind! Didn’t Our Lady say that we would have much to suffer, to make reparation to Our Lord and to Her own Immaculate Heart for all the sins by which They are offended? *They are so sad! If we can console Them with these sufferings, how happy we shall be!*”²⁸⁵

«When Jacinta saw me in tears, she tried to console me, saying: “Don’t cry. Surely, these are the sacrifices which the Angel said that God was going to send us. That’s why you are suffering, so that you can make reparation to Him and convert sinners.”»²⁸⁶

«*But you*», Our Lady had told Lucy, «*are to stay here some time longer. Jesus wishes to make use of you, to make Me known and loved.*»²⁸⁷ Lucy then expressed her sorrow, for which we can easily understand the reasons: the hardship of remaining on earth, of being alone, being without her dear companions, having to endure the lack of understanding and persecutions of those around her. «Shall I remain here all alone?» she asked with sorrow. And, as though the Most Holy Virgin had anticipated her question, She responded:²⁸⁸ «*No, my child. Do you suffer a great deal? Do not be discouraged. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.*»²⁸⁹

Then She opened Her hands. On May 13, right after announcing that God’s grace would comfort the seers, Our Lady had filled them with ineffable graces by the light issuing from Her hands. So also on June 13, the vision of the Immaculate Heart followed right after the promise that it would be Lucy’s refuge and the way that would lead her to God.

Here there is a moving resemblance to the works of St. Louis Marie Grignon de

Montfort, who in one of his most beautiful canticles attributes to Mary words very similar to what Lucy heard: «She says to me in Her language, when I am in my struggles, *Courage, my child, courage; I shall not abandon you.*»²⁹⁰

A new cause for astonishment is that, in the same Light of God, the children were able to see the symbolic expression of their different vocations. After the vision, Francisco was very surprised: «You were with Our Lady», he said to Lucy, «in the light going down to the earth, while Jacinta and I were in the light going up to Heaven.» Lucy explained to him the meaning of this. The prophecy that she expressed by her own understanding is noteworthy, for it was fulfilled to the letter:

«“That is because you and Jacinta will soon go to Heaven”, I replied, “while I, with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, will remain for some time longer on earth.” “How many years longer will you stay here?” he asked. “I don’t know. Quite a lot.” “Was it Our Lady who said so?” “Yes, and I saw it in the light that She shone into our hearts.” Jacinta confirmed the very same thing, saying: “It is just like that! That’s exactly how I saw it too!”»²⁹¹

«I WANT YOU... TO LEARN HOW TO READ»

These words of Our Lady, which Lucy made known immediately — they are found in the report of Father Ferreira —, were very astonishing for Maria Rosa: «What difference does it make to Our Lady whether you know how to read or not?»²⁹²

On October 11, when Canon Formigao asked Lucy if she was learning to read, she had to say no. «How then», he replied, «can you fulfil the order Our Lady gave you?» Lucy said nothing. She explains in her Memoirs:

«I kept silence so as not to have the blame put on my mother, who had not yet given me permission to go to school. At home they said that I wanted to learn to read out of vanity. Until then, almost no little girls learned to read; school was only for boys. It was only later on that a school for girls opened at Fatima.»²⁹³

In fact Our Lady was looking further ahead, for She was well aware that Her messenger could not learn to read right away. When She declared, «I want you...

to learn how to read. Later I will tell you what I want», Our Lady was announcing the great apparitions of Pontevedra and Tuy in 1925 and 1929. The report of Father Ferreira expresses it in a more precise manner: «I want to ask you... *to learn to read so I can tell you what I want.*»²⁹⁴

Let us note in passing that we have here a typical example of the perfect concordance between “Fatima I” and “Fatima II” [see Part II of this book for an explanation of these terms]. In the message of June 13, the request to go to school (Fatima I) harmonizes perfectly with the announcement of the vocation of Lucy and her future mission (Fatima II); and this request cannot even be explained very well except in reference to that part of the dialogue which remained secret in 1917.

III. THE GREAT TRIAL OF LUCY

«*NO ONE IS A PROPHET IN HIS OWN COUNTRY*»

«In the course of this month (Lucy relates), the influx of people increased considerably, and so did the constant questionings and contradictions. Francisco suffered quite a lot from all this, and complained to his sister, saying: “What a pity! If you’d only kept quiet, no one would know! If only it were not a lie, we could tell all the people that we saw nothing, and that would be the end of it. But this can’t be done!”»²⁹⁵

There were also the curious who never ceased to overwhelm the children with questions to try to extort their secret from them. «All the women wanted to know», Ti Marto recalls. They went so far as to offer Jacinta their best jewellery... But the little one was unshakeable: «I will not tell you anything!» she answered. «Even if they gave me the whole world, I will not tell the secret!»²⁹⁶

There were also the scoffers. They were numerous, because in the parish, with the exception of Maria Carreira and a few others, nobody believed in the apparitions yet. «A woman standing in a doorway, hands on hips, shouted at Lucy: “Do you think I believe your visions?” and the boys would taunt: “Look, Lucy, there’s Our Lady on the roof!” And these were the least of the affronts.»²⁹⁷ However all these insults, all these affronts, were not the most painful trial for the seers...

THE SECOND VISIT TO THE PRESBYTERY

«At this time (Lucy writes), the parish priest learned what was happening and sent word to my mother to bring me to the presbytery.²⁹⁸ My mother felt she could breathe again, thinking the priest was going to take responsibility for these events on himself. She therefore said to me: “Tomorrow we’re going to Mass, the first thing in the morning. Then, you are going to the Reverend Father’s house. Just let him compel you to tell the truth, no matter how he does it; let him punish you; let him do whatever he likes with you, just so long as he forces you to admit that you have lied; and then I’ll be satisfied.”

«My sisters also took my mother’s side and invented endless threats, just to frighten me about the interview with the parish priest. I told Jacinta and her brother all about it. “We’re going also”, they replied. “The Reverend Father told our mother to take us there too, but she didn’t say any of those things to us. *Never mind! If they beat us, we’ll suffer for love of Our Lord and for sinners.*”

«Next day I walked along behind my mother, who did not address one single word to me the whole way. I must admit that I was trembling at the thought of what was going to happen. During Mass, I offered my suffering to God. Afterwards, I followed my mother out of the church over to the priest’s house, and started up the stairs leading to the veranda. We had climbed only a few steps, when my mother turned round and exclaimed: “Don’t annoy me any more! Tell the Reverend Father now that you lied, so that on Sunday he can say in the church that it was all a lie, and that will be the end of the whole affair. A nice business, this is! All this crowd running over to the Cova da Iria, just to pray in front of a holm oak bush!”

«Without more ado, she knocked on the door. The good priest’s sister opened the door and invited us to sit down on a bench and wait a while. At last, the parish priest appeared. He took us into a study, motioned my mother to a seat, and beckoned me over to his desk. When I found that His Reverence was questioning me quite calmly, and with such a kindly manner, I was amazed. I was still fearful, however, of what was yet to come. The interrogation was very minute and, I would even venture to say, tiresome.»²⁹⁹

Father Ferreira had begun by interrogating the two little ones. Francisco had answered with simplicity on everything he could speak about. Jacinta however said nothing. No doubt annoyed, the parish priest had said to her: «You don't seem to know anything; sit down there or run away if you like.» Jacinta took out her Rosary and started to say it, while Father Ferreira started to question Lucy, who answered well. From time to time Jacinta got up and told Lucy to explain things properly. At that, Father Ferreira said rather crossly to Jacinta: «When I was asking you questions, you didn't know anything and wouldn't say a word, and now it's the other way about.»³⁰⁰ The scene is taken from real life and shows how false it is to claim that Lucy was the only one to testify...

«ALL THAT IS AN INVENTION OF THE DEVIL.» At the end of the interrogation, the priest pronounced his judgment:

«It doesn't seem to me like a revelation from Heaven. It is usual in such cases for Our Lord to tell the souls to whom He makes such communications to give their parish priest or confessor an account of what has happened. But this child, on the contrary, keeps it to herself as far as she can. *This may also be a deceit of the devil.* We shall see. The future will show us what we are to think about it all.»³⁰¹

These last words, especially because they were pronounced so calmly, were to plunge Lucy into a terrible darkness...

THE GREAT TRIAL OF DOUBT

WHAT IF IT WAS THE DEVIL? «*How much this reflection made me suffer, only God knows, for He alone can penetrate our inmost heart.* I began then to have doubts as to whether these manifestations might be from the devil, who was seeking by these means to make me lose my soul. As I heard people say that the devil always brings conflict and disorder, I began to think that, truly, ever since I had started seeing these things, our home was no longer the same, for joy and peace had fled. What anguish I felt!»

THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF JACINTA AND FRANCISCO. «I made known my doubts to my cousins. “No, it's not the devil”, replied Jacinta, “not at all! They say that the devil is very ugly and that he's down under the ground in hell. But that Lady is so beautiful, and we saw Her go up to

Heaven!” Our Lord made use of this to allay somewhat the doubts I had.

«But during the course of that month, I lost all enthusiasm for making sacrifices and acts of mortification, and ended up hesitating as to whether it wouldn't be better to say that I had been lying, and so put an end to the whole thing. “Don't say that!” exclaimed Jacinta and Francisco. “Don't you see that now you are going to tell a lie, and to tell lies is a sin?”...»

A TERRIBLE NIGHTMARE. «While in this State Of mind, I had a dream which only increased the darkness of my spirit. I saw the devil laughing at having deceived me, as he tried to drag me down to hell. On finding myself in his clutches, I began to scream so loudly and call on Our Lady for help that I awakened my mother. She called out to me in alarm, and asked me what was the matter. I can't recall what I told her, but I do remember that I was so paralysed with fear that I couldn't sleep any more that night. This dream left my soul clouded over with real fear and anguish.»

«My only relief was to go off by myself to some solitary place, there to weep to my heart's content. Even the company of my cousins began to feel burdensome, and for that reason, I began to hide from them as well. The poor children! At times, they would search for me, calling out my name and receiving no answer, but I was there all the while, hidden quite close to them in some corner where they never thought of looking.»³⁰²

THE PERSECUTIONS CONTINUE. «The devil will be there for sure», her mother said, echoing the words of Father Ferreira, who took no trouble to hide his opinions, which were entirely against any supernatural explanation of the events. «Mr. José Alves, an inhabitant of Moita — a hamlet of Fatima — who had been one of the first to believe in the apparitions, speaking one day with the parish priest of Fatima, was openly told by him: “All that is the invention of the devil!”»³⁰³

Such statements only increased the determination of Maria Rosa to use any means she could to make her daughter deny her account. To be sure, Father Ferreira advised her not to beat her daughter physically. But before the commission of inquiry for the canonical process, she would declare that he had authorized her to strike fear into her, and assured her that, like it or not, the little one would admit she had lied.³⁰⁴

THE FIRST CONFESSION OF JACINTA AND FRANCISCO. Around this time, no doubt shortly after the second apparition, Jacinta and Francisco asked to make their first confession... surely with the secret hope of being able to make their first communion right after. How much they desired it! Ti Marto told Father de Marchi how he led them himself to church. After some “bitter-sweet” remarks exchanged in the sacristy between Ti Marto and Father Ferreira, the children made their confession. However, for communion, the priest saw fit to make them wait one more year.³⁰⁵ They also received their share of trials.

«I WILL NOT GO BACK TO THE COVA DA IRIA»

During this time, poor Lucy, fearfully impressed by the double authority of her parish priest and her mother whom she greatly revered, sank more and more into the night of doubt and temptation. It seems that the devil, foreseeing that the message of July 13 would be a decisive event, in his rage pulled out all the stops against the little seers:

«The 13th of July was close at hand, and I was still doubtful as to whether I should go. I thought to myself: “If it’s the devil, why should I go to see him? If they ask me why I’m not going, I’ll say that I’m afraid it might be the devil who is appearing to us, and for that reason I’m not going. Let Jacinta and Francisco do as they like; I’m not going back to the Cova da Iria any more.”»

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE BIG DAY. «My decision made, I was firmly resolved to act on it. By the evening of the 12th, the people were already gathering, in anticipation of the events of the following day. I therefore called Jacinta and Francisco, and told them of my resolution. “We’re going”, they answered. “The Lady said we were to go.”

«Jacinta volunteered to speak to the Lady, but she was so upset over my not going, that she started to cry. I asked the reason for her tears. “Because you don’t want to go!” “No, I’m not going. Listen! If the Lady asks for me, tell Her I’m not going, because I’m afraid it might be the devil.”»³⁰⁶

Francisco also wept. He did not understand his cousin’s doubts and tried to convince her:

«“How can you think it’s the devil?” he asked. “Didn’t you see Our Lady and God in that great light? How can we leave without you, if it is you that must speak?”»³⁰⁷

Lucy, however, would hear nothing of it:

«I left them, then, to go and hide, and so avoid having to speak to all the people who came looking for me to ask questions. My mother thought I was playing with the children of the village... As soon as I got home that night, my mother scolded me: “A fine little plaster saint you are, to be sure! All the time you have left from minding the sheep, you do nothing but play, and what’s more you have to do it in such a way that nobody can find you!”»³⁰⁸

A WHOLE NIGHT IN PRAYER. «That night after supper, Francisco came back, called me out to the old threshing floor, and said: “Look! Aren’t you going tomorrow?” “I’m not going. I’ve already told you I’m not going back there any more.” “But what a shame! Why is it that you now think that way? Don’t you see that it can’t be the devil? *God is already sad enough on account of so many sins, and now if you don’t go, He’ll be sadder still!* Come on, say you’ll go!” “I’ve already told you I’m not going. It’s no use asking me.” And I returned abruptly to the house.

«A few days later he said to me: “*You know, I never slept at all that night. I spent the whole time crying and praying, begging Our Lady to make you go!*”»³⁰⁹

CHAPTER VI

THE TWOFOLD PROPHECY: THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GREAT MIRACLE AND THE SECRET (FRIDAY, JULY 13)

While Lucy remained submerged in the same anguish, and Jacinta and Francisco were troubled, not knowing what to do, the crowd gathered little by little at the Cova da Iria. Many curious people, and already many of the faithful, trusting in the reality of the apparitions, were among them.

Since June 13, some persons had come to recite the Rosary at the foot of the little holm oak. But it was especially Maria Carreira who felt intensely how much this place, where Our Lady had chosen to appear, was already a holy place.

«From that time I always went to the Cova da Iria. At home I felt quite another person. I began to clean up a bit round the tree, and make a little clearing. I took away the gorse and prickles and cut paths with a pruning saw. I took away some of the stones and hung a silk ribbon on one of the branches of the tree. It was I who put the first flowers there.³¹⁰

In her increasing fervour, no doubt shortly before July 13, Maria Carreira decided to do more:

«She wanted to mark the spot of the apparitions by a rustic monument: aided by her husband and her children, she raised a portico like the Portuguese peasants love to erect in their celebrations. Two tree trunks, roughly squared off, attached to the ground, supported a third horizontal part, upon which was mounted a cross and two lamps, whose flame was lit day and night...

«They also erected around the holm oak a wall of dry stones about eighty centimetres high. This little wall had on its east side an opening which could be closed by a wooden grate.

«Such was the first “sanctuary” of Fatima.»³¹¹

On the morning of July 13, Maria Carreira was of course at the Cova da Iria. And this time her husband, her daughters and her son John, the cripple, accompanied her.

I. THE EVENTS OF JULY 13

«MOVED BY A STRANGE FORCE»

«On the following day, when it was nearly time to leave (Lucy relates), *I suddenly felt I had to go, impelled by a strange force that I could hardly resist.*³¹² Then I set out, and called to my uncle's house to see if Jacinta was still there. I found her in her room, together with her brother Francisco, kneeling beside the bed, crying. "Aren't you going?", I asked. "Not without you. We don't dare. Do come!" "Yes, I'm going", I replied. Their faces lighted up with joy, and they set out with me.

«Crowds of people were waiting for us along the road, and only with difficulty did we finally get there.»³¹³

Led by her sister-in-law, Maria Rosa agreed to go along to the Cova da Iria, to see what was going on. But they remained at a distance, so as not to be recognized. A touching detail, which illustrates their perplexity, is that they left for the Cova holding a blessed candle in their hand. «If it is anything evil», they said, «we will light the candles!»

Mr Marto had resolved to be near the children. Not without difficulty, he succeeded in clearing a path for himself through the crowd. There were now a few thousand persons, perhaps three or four thousand. Here is Ti Marto's account:

«And so I got to my Jacinta. Lucy was kneeling a little way off saying the Rosary which the people were answering aloud. When it was finished, she got up so quickly that it seemed as if she were pulled up. She looked to the east and then cried out: "Shut up your umbrellas" (used for the sun), "Our Lady is coming!" I looked as I hard as I could but could see nothing.»³¹⁴

Then the apparition began.³¹⁵

THE APPARITION: THE REVELATION OF THE GREAT SECRET

Lucy looked at the vision without daring to speak to it. Then Jacinta intervened: «Come on, Lucy, speak! Don't you see that She is already there and wants to speak to you?»³¹⁶

THE PREDICTION OF A MIRACLE.

– *What does Your Grace want of me? I asked.*

– ***I want you to come here on the 13th of next month, and to continue praying the Rosary every day in honour of Our Lady of the Rosary, in order to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war, because only She can help you.***

– *I would like to ask you to tell us who you are, and to work a miracle so that everybody will believe that you are appearing to us.*

– ***Continue to come here every month. In October, I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe.***

«I then made some requests, but I cannot recall now just what they were.³¹⁷ What I do remember is that Our Lady said it was necessary for such people to pray the Rosary in order to obtain these graces during the year.»

[THE PRAYER OF REPARATORY OFFERING. «And She continued:

– ***Sacrifice yourselves for sinners, and say many times, especially when you make some sacrifice: “O Jesus, it is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary”.***»³¹⁸

THE GREAT SECRET

THE VISION OF HELL. «As Our Lady spoke these last words, She opened Her hands once more, as She had done during the two previous months. The rays of light seemed to penetrate the earth, and we saw as it were a sea of fire. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating

about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. (It must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people say they heard me.) The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals.»³¹⁹

Here, in her Third Memoir, Sister Lucy added: «This vision only lasted a moment, thanks to our good Mother in Heaven who, in the first apparition, had promised to take us to Heaven. Were it not for that, I believe we would have died out of fright and fear.»³²⁰

THE GREAT PREDICTION OF OUR LADY. «Terrified and as if to plead for succour, we looked up at Our Lady, who said to us, so kindly and so sadly:

«You have seen hell, where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart.

«If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end, but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the reign of Pius XI.

«When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that He is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine and persecutions against the Church and the Holy Father.

«To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays.

«If My requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions against the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated.»³²¹

«In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, and she will be converted, and a certain period of peace will be granted to the world.»³²²

«In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved, etc (sic). Do not tell this to anybody. Francisco, yes, you may tell him.»]

THE URGENT SUPPLICATION FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

«When you say the Rosary, say after each mystery: “O my Jesus, forgive us, save us from the fire of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need.”»

«After this, there was a moment of silence, and then I asked:

– *Is there anything more that You want of me?*

– ***No, I do not want anything more of you today.***

«Then, as before, Our Lady began to ascend towards the east, until She finally disappeared in the immense distance of the firmament.»³²³

THE ATMOSPHERIC SIGNS

While this was going on, Ti Marto relates, «the crowd was so silent that you could have heard a pin drop.» And, like Maria Carreira and some other witnesses, Mr. Marto, who was very near the seers, perceived *an unintelligible murmur*: «then I began to hear a sound, a little buzzing rather like a mosquito in an empty bottle. But I couldn’t hear any words!»³²⁴ This mysterious murmur was heard by only a few rare witnesses.

However, two other unusual phenomena were noticed by a much greater number: «*The luminosity of the sky* noticeably decreased, as during an eclipse, the whole time the ecstasy of the children lasted.» At the same time, *the temperature*, which was very hot, went down noticeably, and *the tint of the light* was modified. The atmosphere became yellow as gold.

In addition, *a whitish cloud*, rather pleasant to look at, formed around the seers.³²⁵ Here is the testimony of Mr. Marto:

«I saw what looked like *a little greyish cloud* resting on the oak tree, and *the sun's heat lessened* and there was a delicious fresh breeze. It hardly seemed like the height of summer.³²⁶

«Finally, after Lucy interrogated the vision for the last time, we heard *a large clap of thunder* and the little arch which had been put up to hang the two lanterns on, trembled as if in an earthquake. Lucy, who was still kneeling, got up so quickly that her skirts ballooned around her, and pointing to the sky she cried out: “There She goes! There She goes!” And then after a moment or two: “Now you can’t see Her any I more.” All this, too, was for me a great proof!»³²⁷

However, as many people as there were who noticed these things, it seemed that not all had equally noticed these initial extraordinary physical phenomena. We will return later on to this surprising disparity of perceptions.

The curious crowd pressed around the seers until they were in danger of suffocation. Mr. Marto, grabbing Jacinta in his arms, managed to carry her to the road. There, a young engineer from the area, Mario Godinho, who had agreed to drive his mother to the Cova da Iria although he himself was incredulous, offered them his automobile. But before returning to Aljustrel, they stopped before the church at Fatima, where Mario Godinho wanted to photograph the three seers. Thus, he took the first photograph that we have of them.

What were the two thousand pilgrims thinking that day, as they left the Cova da Iria? This time we have a document which gives us a clue. On their return, the evening of July 13, several parishioners of Olival came to report their impressions to their good parish priest, Father Faustino Jose Jacinto Ferreira. The latter made a report in the Bulletin of the Council of Vila Nova de Ourem, *O Ouriense*, for which he was responsible: «Everybody», he writes, «or at least the great majority, were satisfied simply to see the way the children presented themselves, spoke (with the Vision), asking questions, relating requests,... and awaiting the moment of the response, which nobody else heard.

«This, I am told – for I was not a witness – in the presence, according to various estimates, of eight hundred, a thousand, well over a thousand, and even two thousand people, who in the most admirable silence recited prayers at one moment, made supplications at another, and at other times wept.»

After the account of the end of the apparition, the dean of Olival, visibly won over by the enthusiasm of his faithful, concluded: «It was simply admirable; but for the moment, I say nothing more.»³²⁸

Indeed, prudence was a necessity. This article, the first – it appeared on July 20 –, would also be the only one, in all the Catholic press, to speak openly in favour of the events of Fatima. This extreme reserve would last until the day after October 13.

II. THE TWOFOLD MESSAGE OF JULY 13

In the whole cycle of the apparitions, that of July 13 is unquestionably the most important. It is the central apparition which the two previous ones prepared for and the three subsequent ones were to confirm in a striking manner by their great miracles. «Indeed it was on that day», Lucy writes, «that Our Lady deigned to reveal to us the secret.»³²⁹

So true is this that the message of July 13 appears to us very clearly divided into two parts: there are the words which were divulged immediately, and the long text of the secret which the seers carefully kept hidden. However, what is important is that the two parts of the message are very closely connected.

THE PROPHECY OF A MIRACLE

The great novelty of this apparition, the decisive word which would attract innumerable crowds to the Cova da Iria for the last three months, is the announcement of a great miracle.

Like Bernadette at Lourdes, it was Lucy who requested this of Our Lady. Did she do this of her own accord, or by the counsel of her parish priest or family? We do not know. In any case, she presents her request: «I would like to ask You to tell us who You are, and to work a miracle so that all may believe that You are appearing to us.» Although the request of Lucy reminds us of Bernadette's request, the response of Our Lady is very different: At Lourdes, when Bernadette followed the advice of Father Peyramale and asked Her to make the rosebush in the grotto bloom, Our Lady was content to smile. In this case, and here is the decisive, prodigious event, She accedes to her request: «Continue to come each

month. In October, I will say who I am and what I want, *and I will work a miracle so that all may believe.*»

Thus She announced three months in advance the place, day and hour of the promised great miracle. It was a clear promise, without any condition or the least ambiguity. On August 19 and September 13, Our Lady repeated it in the same terms. Never before had Heaven shown such condescendence to the demands of men, to guarantee for them with certitude the truth of a message. Already, *by this solid link between the prophecy and the miracle, the event of Fatima is unheard of, incomparable.*

THE GREAT SECRET

It is significant that Our Lady made this announcement of the «miracle so that all will believe» immediately before revealing to the three seers Her great prophetic secret. This was to make them understand, in all clarity, that the miraculous realization of the miracle would guarantee the divine origin of the secret, as well as the fulfilment of this prophetic secret. Thus the great miracle of October 13 was closely associated, by the Blessed Virgin Herself, not only with the whole of Her message, but especially with the prophetic secret of July 13.

We will not comment now on this text, which is packed with meaning. It is the expression of insistent requests, a solemn warning followed by historical prophecies of a worldwide significance. The history and content of this extraordinary message, which we can affirm is unprecedented in all the history of the Church, will be the subject of the next two volumes of our work. We will show, in offering a literal commentary, how it has been fulfilled in every respect, point by point. Let us content ourselves here with only those remarks necessary for a good understanding of subsequent events.

IN THE DIVINE FURNACE. It was when Our Lady «opened Her hands again as in the two previous months», that the children had the vision of hell. This month, no doubt the Blessed Virgin remained in this attitude while She revealed the secret. And the supernatural light which they received then was not limited to the vision of hell. Once again, as on May 13 and June 13, they enjoyed a sort of vision of God:

«In the third apparition (Lucy reports), Francisco seemed to be the one on

whom the vision of hell made the least impression, though it did indeed have quite a considerable effect on him. What made the most powerful impression on him and what wholly absorbed him was God, the Most Holy Trinity, perceived in that light which penetrated our inmost souls.

«Afterwards he said: “*We were on fire in that light which is God, and yet we were not burnt!* What is God?... We could never put it into words. Yes, that is something indeed which we could never express! *But what a pity it is that He is so sad! If only I could console Him!*”»³³⁰

This great sorrow of God, which reveals to us His Fatherly Heart, outraged by our sins, and as it were overwhelmed by the chastisements which these sins justly draw down upon us, profoundly marked the soul of Francisco during the first three apparitions. He never forgot it, and his whole ideal would be to pray and sacrifice himself to «console God».

THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY. The apparition of July 13 also marks the high point of the revelation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the centre and very heart of the whole message. The three apparitions of the Angel, followed by those of Our Lady on May 13 and June 13, had prepared this revelation which the great secret expresses in all its fullness. But it is a remarkable fact that in the last three apparitions there is no more mention of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This great design of divine mercy for the salvation of the world would not be unveiled until later...

That is why, on July 13, Our Lady solemnly announced that She would come back. She kept Her promise and returned on December 10, 1925 at Pontevedra, to manifest once again Her Heart pierced with thorns, and to request the practice of the communion of reparation on the five First Saturdays of the month. And She came back one more time, on June 13, 1929, at Tuy, to ask for the consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart.

Russia? On July 13, Lucy did not yet know what this word meant. Yet she always affirmed having heard the words, «*a Russia*». ³³¹ Similarly, she is sure of having heard «*no reinado de Pio XI*». «We did not know if it was a Pope or a king», she confided to Father Jongen in 1946, «but the most Holy Virgin spoke of Pius XI.»³³² As for the announcement of «a night illumined by an unknown light», it was fulfilled to the letter during the night of January 25-26, 1938.³³³ An immense, engrossing history which we follow step by step in all its details...

right up to our own crucial hour.



The seers immediately after the apparition of July 13 and the vision of hell. The snapshot was taken by Mario Godinho, near the church in Fatima.

A PERFECT HARMONY

Let us point out here, since it is important for critical purposes, what perfect harmony there is between the two parts of the message, that which was divulged immediately (Fatima I), and that which remained secret a long time (Fatima II). The convergence of themes, which marks the profound unity of the same message pronounced by the Blessed Virgin the same day, is striking.

“ONLY SHE CAN HELP YOU.” The secret of the secret is that God wills to give us everything through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin, in response to our devotion to Her Immaculate Heart, not only spiritual goods but even temporal peace, and this for the whole world. Has anyone noticed that one of the words of Our Lady, faithfully reported by Lucy to her parish priest the next day, has the same vigour, the same exclusivity? «Continue to pray the Rosary every day... to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war, *for only She can help you.*» It is , equivalent to saying: there is no salvation for us except through the Blessed Virgin; this was already the essential core of the secret of Fatima which was disclosed as early as July, 1917.

THE OBSESSIVE FEAR FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS, which is the other key of the secret, with its terrible first part, the gripping vision of hell, was clearly manifested at the very moment of the apparition, inscribed on the faces of the seers. All the witnesses in fact noticed the great sorrow which suddenly overwhelmed them. Those who were very near were very much moved by the sudden cry which fell from the lips of Lucy. At this moment, says Ti Marto, «Lucy took a deep breath, went as pale as death, and we heard her cry out in terror to Our Lady, calling Her by name.»³³⁴

Is it not this same fright, distorting their faces, which is still visible on the photograph of the three seers taken by Mario Godinho, a few minutes after the apparition?

“PRECIOUS PEARLS.” It was also on July 13 that Our Lady revealed the only two prayers She taught the children, the one just before the secret, to invite them to sacrifice, and the other right after, to complete each decade of the Rosary. These are two very brief formulas, which show once again the humility and also the great pedagogy of the Virgin Mary. They are almost ejaculatory prayers which can easily come unceasingly to our lips. They are two precious pearls which, in a few words, synthesize the whole essence of Her message...

AN URGENT SUPPLICATION FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS

Right after the end of the secret, Our Lady continued: «When you say the Rosary, say after each mystery:

***“O my Jesus, forgive us,
deliver us from the fire of hell;
lead all souls to Heaven,
especially those most in need.”»***³³⁵

“O MY JESUS.” The two prayers taught by Our Lady are addressed to Her Son, to Jesus, our “God-Saviour”. This alone suffices to destroy the calumnies of the reformists opposed to Fatima under the fallacious pretext that Her message is not Christocentric enough! What an error! At Fatima, Our Lady willed to add to the great prayer in Her honour this short invocation addressed to Jesus the Saviour. Inserted between the *Gloria Patri* to the Holy Trinity, the *Our Fathers* and the *Aves*, which supplicate our Father and Mother in Heaven, this little prayer

enlarges the divine horizon of our Rosary.

“FORGIVE US!” The thought of our sin, this sin so profoundly rooted in us and which threatens to cause our ruin, is present everywhere in the message of Fatima. There is not one of the nine apparitions of the Angel and the most Blessed Virgin which does not make some allusion to it. Each of the four prayers taught to us, brief as they are, all make some mention of it. This prayer, which is no exception, echoes the litany of *Paters* and *Aves*: “Forgive us our trespasses”, and “pray for us sinners”.³³⁶

“DELIVER US FROM THE FIRE OF HELL!” This supplication, the most urgent, refers of course to the vision of hell. The concrete evocation of its terrifying fire was willed expressly to call to mind the description of hell sketched by Lucy. Yes, it is willed by Our Lady, who is the sovereign teacher, that this word hell always remind us of this devouring fire, which most exactly expresses its terrible reality.

«*Livrai nos do fogo do inferno!*» The expression is strong and vigorous, and deliberately so. Not only «preserve us», but more exactly, «deliver us»! It makes explicit the last request of the Our Father, with the same verb, «but *deliver us* from evil». This is to say that hell is not for us an imaginary and far off danger, from which we can escape by ourselves. No, it is the just and certain culmination of rebellions against God and hardening of the heart, where we would go without the pardon of Jesus, our Saviour, and without the help of His grace, full of mercy. Without Him, without His Passion and His redeeming Blood, we are already lost. We owe our salvation to Him alone, and He desires that we ask Him: «O my Jesus, deliver us from the fire of hell!»

The prayer of Fatima is very close to what the liturgy says: «From eternal death, deliver us, O Jesus!» implore the litanies. And the prayer of the Roman Canon, stating clearly the intention of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, says: «Deliver us from eternal damnation (*ab aeterna damnatione nos eripi*), and number us in the flock of Thine elect.» The same vigorous expression is found in the Litany of the Saints, and this time it makes quite clear who is meant by the “us”: it is we ourselves and all our dear ones who have the faith, and we implore pardon for ourselves: «That You would deliver our souls and the souls of our brethren, relations and benefactors, from eternal damnation, we beseech You, hear us! *Ut animas nostras . . . ab aeterna damnatione eripias, te rogamus audi nos!*»

It is an urgent supplication, but it is also full of an immense trust. For in hope we are already sure of obtaining the forgiveness of Our Saviour, and eventually reaching the happiness of Heaven... Thus, our horizons are enlarged, leading us to the second part of the prayer:

“LEAD ALL SOULS TO HEAVEN.” Our ardent desire to be saved, ourselves and our dear ones, is necessarily extended to all souls. Christ offered His life for all men, without exception, and God His Father «wishes to save all men»; so why shouldn't all souls go to Heaven? The little prayer becomes... a universal prayer. It is mystical, and it expresses a true and ardent charity. «Lord», Father de Foucauld loved to repeat, «if it could be possible, make all men go to Heaven!»

«All souls», «*as almas todas*», or in the version most often quoted by Sister Lucy, «*as alminhas todas*», with this diminutive of commiseration, «all these poor souls», just as we would say, «poor sinners». «*Levai para o Ceu!*» Lead them to Heaven! The word can hardly be translated: take them, carry them, lift them right up to Heaven! And perhaps even better, as Father Simonin and Dom Jean-Nesmy translate: «*Draw all souls to Heaven.*» It reminds us of the words of Jesus on the evening of Palm Sunday, just before entering into the work of His redemptive Sacrifice: «“Now is the prince of this world cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will *draw* all men to Myself.” He said this to show by what death He was going to die.»³³⁷ «*Omnia traham ad meipsum.*» Lifted up on the Cross, like a new brazen serpent, He will heal all those who look at Him, the only Saviour, «Whom they have pierced». And soon, ascending to Heaven, He will take a host of prisoners with Him.³³⁸

“ESPECIALLY THOSE MOST IN NEED.” These last words bewildered Canon Formigao. Indeed they are surprising: How can we ask Jesus to lead all souls to Heaven, and thus all without exception, and then immediately add a formula which on the contrary is partial and restrictive? The words, “all... especially” seem to defy simple logic.

And yet the formula is surely authentic, and the difficulty disappears when we consider that it concerns the salvation of souls, which is always a pure and infinite mercy of God. The logic here is one of love, full of implications which cause the too narrow framework of the exact relation of the concepts to explode. The suppliant soul, in the zeal of its love, would like to obtain from the Divine Mercy the salvation of all souls... but it knows that its request cannot be heard in

all its extension... it does not merit it. In this case, it immediately clarifies its request, and says to God: “I ask You to have mercy at least on some souls, and most especially, as a priority, on the souls of the greatest sinners, who most surely risk being lost!” Such is the logic of the saints...

This is how the three seers understood this prayer, in the light of its immediate context, the vision of hell.³³⁹ A striking passage from the Memoirs shows us how the little prayer of Our Lady often returned to the lips of Jacinta, and not only between decades of the Rosary, but to implore often the salvation of souls:

«Jacinta often sat thoughtfully on the ground or on a rock, and exclaimed: “Oh, Hell! Hell! How sorry I am for the souls who go to hell! And the people down there, burning alive, like wood in the fire!” Then, shuddering, she knelt down with her hands joined, and recited the prayer Our Lady had taught us: “O my Jesus! Pardon us, save us from the fire of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need.”

«Now», Sister Lucy continues, «Your Excellency will understand how my own impression was that the final words of this prayer refer to souls *in greatest danger of damnation*, or those who are nearest to it.»³⁴⁰

These last words turn our attention towards those in their last agony. In all the myriads of Ave Marias we shall have prayed all during our life, we ask the Mother of Mercy to pray for us «at the hour of our death». But all these hardened souls who outraged Her unceasingly and never invoked Her? It is for them, in their place that Our Lady makes us pray during our Rosary.

This priority accorded the greatest sinners, was not understood, and was the principal reason why the original version of the prayer was abandoned for so long in favour of another, more classical one. Yet this prayer brings us to the full reality of the Gospel. It is the priority given to the erring sheep for the twofold reason that it is lost, and that its salvation will show more strikingly the untiring Love of its Good Shepherd! It was St. Therese of the Child Jesus who, «devoured by a thirst for souls, burned with the desire to snatch from the eternal flames the souls of the greatest sinners». Hence her decision «to prevent at any price from going to hell», the horrible criminal whose three murders had monopolized the news. On him also, «this poor unfortunate Pranzini», did she wish to pour out the salvific and «divine dew» of the Blood of Jesus.³⁴¹

We will see that this concern for the salvation of the greatest sinners is a frequent theme in later revelations granted to Sister Lucy. It was equally the constant thought of Jacinta:

«Jacinta remained on her knees like this for long periods of time, saying the same prayers over and over again. From time to time, like someone awaking from sleep, she called out to her brother or myself: “Francisco! Francisco! Are you praying with me? We must pray very much, to save souls from hell! So many go there! So many!”»³⁴²

THE LITTLE PRAYER OF REPARATORY OFFERING

Sister Lucy humbly confesses in her second Memoir: «During this month (June 13 - July 13), I lost all enthusiasm for making sacrifices and acts of mortification... To reawaken my fervour which had grown cold, Our Lady told us: “Sacrifice yourselves for sinners, and say often to Jesus, especially each time you make a sacrifice:

***‘O Jesus, it is for love of You,
for the conversion of sinners,
and in reparation for sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.’”»***

Here is a very simple prayer, whose significance is immediately grasped. Again it is to Jesus-Saviour that our offering is addressed, but in addition to the desire to please Him through love, in accomplishing the action we offer Him, two other intentions are added. And the whole richness of this prayer consists precisely in their indissoluble bond of reciprocal implication, which causes each of these intentions to remind us of the other two. Note how the thought of the salvation of sinners is found inserted there like a wedge between the two acts of love for Jesus and Mary. This shows to what extent the missionary intention is at the very heart of the message of Fatima, as necessarily flowing from the true love of the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

This prayer is also an act of reparation, wonderfully implementing the two prayers by which the Angel invites us to repair the offences done to God our Father, and to Jesus-in-the-Host, «present in all the tabernacles of the world». Here, the reparation is addressed to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We will not

insist on that point here, for it will be the subject of the great revelation of Pontevedra...



Jacinta, Lucy and Francisco, photographed between July 13th and August 13th by Joachim Antonio do Carmo, in the garden of the Marto family.

«“O, my dear Our Lady! I'll say as many Rosaries as You want!” And from then on, he made a habit of moving away from us, as though going for a walk. When we called him and asked him what he was doing, he raised his hand and showed me his Rosary...» (IV, p. 129)

III. FROM JULY 13 TO AUGUST 13: A HIDDEN AND HEROIC LIFE

SACRIFICES TO SAVE SOULS FROM HELL. Sister Lucy never ceased to repeat that the vision of hell profoundly marked the souls of the three seers.³⁴³ On May 13, 1936, she would even write: «... This vision which would make such an impression on all three, especially Jacinta, whose character was even changed.»³⁴⁴ And in her third Memoir:

«... some of the things revealed in the secret made a very strong impression on Jacinta. This was indeed the case. The vision of hell filled her with horror to such a degree that every penance and mortification was as nothing in her eyes, if it could only prevent souls from going there.»³⁴⁵

THE LITTLE PRAYER OF OFFERING. So much did she take to heart sacrifices for the conversion of sinners that she never let any occasion go by,³⁴⁶ and each time she repeated the prayer taught by Our Lady, thus conferring on the sacrifice offered its *whole meritorious value as an act of love, both reparatory and missionary*:

«Ever since the day Our Lady taught us to offer our sacrifices to Jesus, any time we had something to suffer or agreed to make a sacrifice, Jacinta asked: “Did you already tell Jesus it’s for love of Him?” If I said I hadn’t, she answered: “Then I’ll tell Him”, and joining her hands, she raised her eyes to Heaven and said: “Oh Jesus, it is for love of You, and for the conversion of sinners!”»³⁴⁷

A SUPERNATURAL DISCRETION. Although our three shepherds, with a charming spontaneity, did not fear to confide to one another all their acts of virtue, without the least return for themselves, with all other people they always kept absolute discretion.

This is why Lucy decided not to make known the pressing invitation of Our Lady, «sacrifice yourselves for sinners», and the prayer of offering, although they were not part of the secret properly speaking. Jacinta was very surprised at this:

«Why can’t we say that the Lady told us to make sacrifices for sinners?» And Lucy, with a mature supernatural insight, which was also a great common sense, answered quite simply: «*So they won’t be asking what kind of sacrifices we are making!*»³⁴⁸

What wisdom in this decision! Since they had no priest to confide in, and Our Lady Herself was their guide, they felt irresistibly moved by a special grace to follow Her inspirations. Without this absolute discretion, all their heroic sacrifices which today arouse our admiration – to the very extent that they made sure to keep them carefully hidden – would only have been vain hypocrisy and proud ostentation.

Moreover, their secret sacrifices and prayers did not prevent them from keeping, in ordinary life, the habits natural to children that age. «We continued to play as before», Sister Lucy explains to Father Jongen. «Some people said to us: “You saw the Holy Virgin, therefore you should no longer amuse yourselves.” But

what could we do, if not amuse ourselves? Should we have remained immobile, like the statue of our Foundress on her altar?»³⁴⁹ These words, which show perfect psychological and spiritual health, also witness to a true mystical spirit. It was not the role of children of that age to give lessons in mortification to those around them. Our Lady asked them to make sacrifices in secret, and it is their example that now instructs us.

“YOU WILL HAVE MUCH TO SUFFER.” «The doubt which had tormented me from June 13 to July 13», Sister Lucy writes, «disappeared during this last apparition.³⁵⁰ Thanks to Our Good Lord, this apparition dispelled the clouds from my soul and my peace was restored.»³⁵¹

However, sufferings would not be lacking to the three seers, who on May 13 had freely offered themselves as victims. While awaiting the persecutions from the adversaries of the Church, Lucy continued to feel cruel persecutions from within her own family. It was clear that for Maria Rosa, since she had to choose between the testimony of her daughter and confidence in her parish priest, the choice must necessarily be in favour of the priest...

THE TRIAL OF THE THIRD INTERROGATION

«My mother (Lucy recalls) was more and more distressed by the progress of events. She made a new effort to oblige me to confess that I had lied. One day, she called me and said that she was going to take me to the priest's house. “When we get there, you will kneel down, tell him you lied, and ask for pardon.”»³⁵²

PRAYERS AND TEARS. «As we were going past my aunt's house, my mother went inside for a few minutes. This gave me a chance to tell Jacinta what was happening. Seeing me upset, she shed some tears and said: “I'm going to get up and call Francisco. We'll go and pray for you at the well. When you get back, come and find us there.”»³⁵³

«In effect (Lucy writes), we chose this spot for our more intimate talks, our fervent prayers, and our tears as well – and sometimes very bitter tears they were. We mingled our tears with the water of the same well from which we drank. Does this not make the well itself an image of Mary, in whose Heart we dried our tears and drank of the purest consolation?»³⁵⁴

AT THE PRIEST'S HOUSE. «As we walked along, my mother preached me a fine sermon. At a certain point, I said to her, trembling: "*But mother, how can I say that I did not see, when I did see?*" My mother was silent. As we drew near the priest's house, she declared: "Just you listen to me! What I want is that you should tell the truth. If you saw, say so! But if you didn't see, admit that you lied."

«Without another word, we climbed the stairs, and the good priest received us with the greatest kindness and even, I might almost say, affection. He questioned me seriously, but most courteously, and resorted to various stratagems to see if I would contradict myself, or be inconsistent in my statements. Finally, he dismissed us, shrugging his shoulders, as if to imply: "*I don't know what to make of all this!*"»³⁵⁵

"OUR LADY WILL ALWAYS HELP US." «On my return, I ran to the well, and there were the two of them on their knees, praying. As soon as they saw me, Jacinta ran to hug me, and then she said: "You see! We must never be afraid of anything! The Lady will help us always. She's such a good friend of ours!"»³⁵⁶

«BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED»

Since July 13 the flow of curious people, as well as the faithful who came to the Cova da Iria to recite the Rosary, continued to increase. Lucy relates: «My poor mother worried more and more, as she saw the crowds who came flocking from all parts.» Lucy's mother said: «These poor people come here, taken in by your trickery, you can be sure of that, and I really don't know what I can do to undeceive them.»³⁵⁷

Frozen with obstinacy in this attitude, Maria Rosa became harsher and harsher towards her daughter. The following episode shows it:

«A poor man who boasted of making fun of us, of insulting us and of even going so far as to beat us, asked my mother one day: "Well, ma'am, what have you got to say about your daughter's visions?" "I don't know", she answered. "It seems to me that she's nothing but a fake, who is leading half the world astray." "Don't say that out loud, or somebody's likely to kill her. I think there are people around here who'd be only too glad to do so." "Oh,

I don't care, just as long as they force her to confess the truth. As for me, I always tell the truth, whether against my children, or anybody else, or even against myself."

«And, truly, this was so. My mother always told the truth, even against herself. We, her children, are indebted to her for this good example.»³⁵⁸

In the meantime, poor Lucy, who also had to give testimony in favour of the truth, suffered terribly. Indeed from that time, any reason to persecute the seer seemed justified. All the accounts, ringing out with truth as they do, show us to what degree of heroic suffering Lucy endured, to certify the veracity of her testimony.

THE LOSS OF THE COVA DA IRIA. «In the intimacy of my family, there was fresh trouble, and the blame for this was thrown on me. The Cova da Iria was a piece of land belonging to my parents. In the hollow, it was more fertile, and there we cultivated maize, greens, peas, and other vegetables. On the slopes grew olive trees, oaks and holm oaks.

«Now, ever since the people began to go there, we had been unable to cultivate anything at all. Everything was trampled on. As the majority came mounted, their animals ate all they could find and wrecked the whole place. My mother bewailed her loss: "You now", she said to me, "when you want something to eat, ask the Lady for it!" My sisters chimed in with: "Yes, you can have what grows in the Cova da Iria!"

«These remarks cut me to the heart, so much so that I hardly dared to take a piece of bread to eat. To force me to tell the truth, as she said, my mother, more often than not, beat me soundly with the broom-handle or a stick from the woodpile near the fireplace.»³⁵⁹

Granted, one can excuse the recriminations of Maria Rosa, who being physically and emotionally exhausted could only with difficulty feed her family. What is certain is that outwardly the apparitions were nothing but a source of sorrowful trials for the seers as well as for their parents. At least nobody could say that they drew any kind of profit from them, whether honours or riches... Quite the contrary.

God is terribly demanding for His privileged ones, and no doubt the hardest

thing for Lucy was this opposition of her mother, whom she continued to cherish tenderly, for her mother was also suffering.

“I SAW THE HAND OF GOD IN IT ALL.” «... In spite of this, mother that she was, she then tried to revive my failing strength. She was full of concern when she saw me so thin and pale, and feared I might fall sick. Poor mother! Now, indeed, that I understand what her situation really was, how sorry I feel for her! Truly, she was right to judge me unworthy of such a favour, and therefore to think I was lying.

«By a special grace from Our Lord, I never experienced the slightest thought or feeling of resentment regarding her manner of acting towards me. As the Angel had announced that God would send me sufferings, I always saw the hand of God in it all. The love, esteem, and respect which I owed her, went on increasing, just as though I were most dearly cherished. And now, I am more grateful to her for having treated me like this, than if she had continued to surround me with endearments and caresses.»

In reading the letters that the little boarding student at the college of Vilar, near Porto, wrote to her mother from 1921 to 1925, we discover with amazement that the seer's heart was filled with a very tender and overflowing affection for her mother... as if she had always been treated with tenderness.³⁶⁰ Such virtue is surely the mark of a soul profoundly abandoned to the action of grace.

APPENDIX I

CRITICAL REMARKS ON THE REVELATION OF THE SECRET

One of the objections of Father Dhanis against the authenticity of the secret was the supposed hesitation of the seers concerning the date it was revealed to them. However, the objection stands only if we ignore the fully satisfactory explanation furnished by Sister Lucy and confirmed, as we will see, by the interrogations of 1917.

«Since June 13 (she writes), whenever they asked us if Our Lady had said anything else, we began to give this reply: “Yes, She did, but it’s a secret.” If they asked us why it was a secret, we shrugged our shoulders, lowered our heads, and kept silent. *But after the 13th of July, we said: “Our Lady told us we*

*were not to tell it to anybody”, thus referring to the secret imposed on us by Our Lady.»*³⁶¹

Indeed what is certain is that, since this date, the children invoked the order of Our Lady to justify their twofold silence, both on the prophecy of their own future, and also on the great secret properly speaking, since the two were bound together. This is what puzzled their interrogators more than anything else, and providentially so.

THE SEERS REFER TO THE SECRET OF JULY 13

However, we can establish – and this is of capital importance for critical purposes – that many of the responses of the seers after July 13 directly concerned the secret revealed that day, not the words of June 13.

Thus on the very same day, right after the apparition, the seer was asked: «“Lucy, what did the Lady say that made you so sad?” “It’s a secret.” “A nice one?” “For some people it’s good and for others bad.” “Can’t you tell us?” “No, I can’t.”»³⁶²

Likewise, in the interrogations of Canon Formigao, it is interesting to go back over all the responses of the seers concerning the secret. When it is made clear that the children include the June 13 message concerning their future in the great Secret revealed on July 13, then one understands that after they are questioned about the Secret, they would refer to either date, which understandably confuses the interrogator.

Thus for example, on October 11 the Canon asked Jacinta: «Is the secret that you will be good and happy?» «Yes, it is for the good of all three of us.» Francisco responded similarly to the same question, on October 13. But when Canon Formigao continued: «Is it for the good of the parish priest’s soul?» Francisco very wisely held back: «I don’t know.» «Would the people be sad if they knew the secret?» «Yes», Francisco answered, clearly thinking of the great secret of July 13. Jacinta had already given the same answer to this question on October 11. Lucy, no doubt more sophisticated and prudent than her cousins, was content to say: «I believe people will remain as they are, or pretty much the same.»³⁶³

This also explains certain hesitations on the part of Lucy. Thus, after having

affirmed that Our Lady had forbidden revealing the secret (of July 13) to anybody, she would not go so far as to state firmly that she could not reveal it to her confessor, thinking this time of the words of June 13:

«“Is it certain that She revealed a secret to you, and that She forbids you to reveal it to anybody?” “Yes, it is certain.” “Could you not reveal it at least to your confessor?” She did not answer this question, which seemed to embarrass her, and the Canon thought it better not to insist.»³⁶⁴

In her Memoirs, Sister Lucy explains her hesitation: «I remained perplexed, not knowing what to answer, because I kept several things secret which I was not forbidden to reveal. But I thank God who inspired my questioner to go on with the interrogation. I remember how I breathed again.»³⁶⁵

It was clear that she could not reveal the secret of July 13 to anyone, not even her confessor, without divine permission.³⁶⁶ But the words of June 13? She did not know... hence her silence.

JUNE 13 OR JULY 13?

As for the date the secret was revealed, on October 11 Jacinta said that it was St. Anthony's day. Lucy said the same on October 13: «It seems to me that it was the second time.» Yet it is impossible to draw any conclusions from these affirmations. In the interrogations of October, the seers sometimes mistakenly attributed to one apparition words which were in fact pronounced on the preceding or following apparitions. Their mistake is easily explained when we remember that Our Lady repeated the majority of the themes of Her message in several successive apparitions, and on the other hand they surely did not yet recognize the importance of stating clearly that Our Lady had pronounced such and such a word on June 13 or July 13. Later on, Lucy would be able to do that, when she would have to write down the message.

However, it is noteworthy that when asked again on November 2, 1917, Jacinta answered Canon Formigao: «I believe it was in July that Our Lady revealed the secret.»³⁶⁷ In her account of June 5, 1922, Lucy also places the secret – and ever so discreetly!³⁶⁸ – on July 13. She does so once again, in the same terms, in the canonical inquiry of 1924. After December 17, 1927, the date Our Lord permitted her to reveal it to her confessor, Sister Lucy no longer needed to be

quite so circumspect. If it was not divulged at that moment, it was only because... nobody asked her!³⁶⁹

APPENDIX II

THE PRAYER FOR SOULS

What souls does it have to do with? The souls of sinners? Or the souls in Purgatory, as was long believed?

TWO DIFFERENT VERSIONS

Up until the forties, in the majority of works on Fatima, we find the following version, cited by Father Castelbranco: «O my Jesus, forgive us our sins! Save us from the fires of hell! And relieve the souls in Purgatory, especially the most abandoned.»³⁷⁰ At this time, the pilgrims of Fatima recited the same formula at the Cova da Iria. How can we explain this discrepancy?

THE AUTHENTIC VERSION

During the interrogation of August 21, 1917, Lucy related to Father Ferreira the version revealed by Our Lady a little more than a month earlier. Except for two words which do not change the sense,³⁷¹ it is exactly identical with the text Sister Lucy transcribed in her fourth Memoir, December 8, 1941. Hence it is this latter version we have commented on: «O my Jesus, forgive us, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need.»³⁷²

Thus, there is no doubt about the authenticity of these texts, especially since in addition to these texts there are many others which show that Sister Lucy did not change the wording, except for tiny details which do not in any way alter the sense of the prayer.³⁷³

THE INTERPRETATION OF CANON FORMIGAO

We know that during the interrogation of September 27, 1917, Lucy recited to

Canon Formigao the same authentic version which she had already indicated a month before to her parish priest.³⁷⁴

But who are these souls «who are most in need», and for whom Our Lady asks us to pray? The good Canon, who of course knew neither the secret nor the messages of the Angel, nor the repeated invitations of Our Lady to pray and sacrifice ourselves for sinners, and was ignorant especially of the vision of hell, which is the immediate context of the revelation of this prayer, thought that it undoubtedly had to do with the most abandoned souls in Purgatory.

Did not the word “*alminhas*”, diminutive of “*almas*”, strongly suggest this hypothesis? Canon Barthas, who himself resolutely opted for the other solution, explains: «In Portuguese, the word “*almas*”, especially in its diminutive form, “*alminhas*” (the little, poor or dear souls), employed without a qualifier, ordinarily designates the souls in Purgatory. In the churches, the donation boxes for the souls in Purgatory bear the inscription, “*caixa das almas*”, and on the corners of the roads one can find little buildings called “*ermida das alminhas*” (oratory of the poor souls).”³⁷⁵ Another significant detail: it is not rare in Portugal to hear a beggar asking for alms, “*para as alminhas*”, for the souls in Purgatory.

Hence we can easily understand how Canon Formigao came to believe that the prayer of Our Lady had to do with the departed. He also added a phrase to the initial version: «Lead all souls in Purgatory to Heaven, *as alminhas do purgatorio todas...*» But once this interpretation was deliberately adopted, he came logically to modify the text, as he himself recognized later on,³⁷⁶ for the sake of greater clarity. This is the origin of the formula that he adopted and published in his works: «O my Jesus, pardon us, save us from the fires of hell, *and relieve the souls in Purgatory, especially the most abandoned.*»³⁷⁷

When in 1927 he quoted the interrogation of September 27, 1917, he presented *his formula* as being Lucy’s response to the question. This explains how the new version of the prayer, as corrected by himself, became widespread later on.³⁷⁸

THE INTERPRETATION OF SISTER LUCY

Beginning in 1921, and then for many long years, Lucy was so far removed from the pilgrimages of Fatima that she was almost completely ignorant of what was

happening. Thus she could not rectify the erroneous formula that was recited there. But when she was asked for her opinion (unfortunately it was a little late!), she insisted on the re-establishment of the original version, and the interpretation that seemed the most obvious to her. We have already cited her letter to Father Gonçalves. She did so again, with still more vigour, in a conversation with Canon Barthas, on October 18, 1946. Here is the text:

«I permitted myself to ask Sister Lucy to qualify the sense of the word “*alminhas*” (souls): “In these souls which have need of divine assistance, must we see the souls in Purgatory or those of sinners?”, I asked her. “*Sinners*”, she answered without hesitating. “Why do you think so?” “*Because the Blessed Virgin always spoke of the souls of sinners. She drew our attention to them in every way; she never spoke of the souls in Purgatory.*”

“Why, in your opinion, did the Blessed Virgin interest you especially in sinners, rather than the souls in Purgatory?” “No doubt because the souls in Purgatory are already saved, being already in the vestibule of Heaven, while the souls of sinners are on the road leading to damnation.” (This was essentially my own opinion also.)

“Your explanation seems highly theological to me. Why then in many churches and even in Portugal are the souls in Purgatory named in this prayer?” “*Nao sei. I don’t know. I myself never spoke of the souls in Purgatory. As for the rest, it does not concern me.*”»³⁷⁹

This declaration seems to us decisive. The prayer taught by Our Lady can only be understood properly in the more general context of the secret of Fatima. This excuses the modification of the text which Canon Formigao, in all good faith, thought he was entitled to make. Today, however, we prefer to recite this prayer in the same spirit as the three little seers, for as Sister Lucy justly writes in another place, «ordinarily, God accompanies His revelations with an intimate and minute knowledge of what they signify.»³⁸⁰

Shall we then forget the dear souls in Purgatory? The response of Our Lady on May 13 («She will be in Purgatory until the end of the world») suffices to show us how much they need our prayers. It is a beautiful duty in charity to intercede for them, and especially for the most abandoned among them. Far from excluding each other, all Catholic devotions mutually strengthen each other. It is for each individual to practice his devotion following the impulse of the

particular grace which has been given to him... There is plenty of room in a heart on fire with the love of souls!

CHAPTER VII

THE BREATHTAKING COMMUNION OF SAINTS (SUNDAY, AUGUST 19, AT “VALINHOS”)

The three to five thousand people present on July 13 at the Cova da Iria had made known everywhere, for the most part with faith and enthusiasm, the announcement of the great miracle promised by Our Lady on the following October 13. The powers that be and its organs of the press could not henceforth remain indifferent.

I. FREEMASONRY ENTERS THE PICTURE

«A MISSION OF HEAVEN – COMMERCIAL SPECULATION?» This was the title of the first article in the great republican and Masonic press on the events of Fatima. It appeared on July 23 in *O Seculo*, the great *liberal* daily of Lisbon, and evaluated the apparition of the 13th, in its own manner of course.

Caricatured and ironic elements, invented on all sides, were present in the picture they painted: «The children intoned a funeral chant, made epileptic gestures, and fell into ecstasy.» In spite of everything, the scope of the event and its effect on the masses were described very well: «The event made such an impression that on that day, one could not find a single car to rent, although this city, as everybody knows, possesses carriages and taxis in abundance. A good number of stores were even closed...» In the evening, numerous pilgrims returned to their homes traversing the villages and singing canticles and acclamations in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

«The case would seem utterly ridiculous to us, and we would not have taken it seriously», the journalist of Torres Novas continues, «had not the person we questioned merited our entire confidence... and if his declarations had not been confirmed by other people who relate the same thing...»³⁸¹

But testimony was of little importance, for the semi-official organ of those in power had to supply their readers with the solution of “free thought”. This was easily found: they had only to draw on the old arsenal of anticlerical propaganda... Here it is: They were looking to discover, as at Lourdes, a source

of mineral water (sic), from which the clergy soon desired to draw substantial profits!

The important part is that the article in the Masonic journal concluded with a serious warning for the local authorities: «The authorities have certainly heard about these events, and even if they knew nothing more about them, our information could serve them as a warning cry.»³⁸²

“THE TINSMITH” DECIDES TO INTERVENE

The authority in question at the time was Artur de Oliveira Santos, the Administrator of the *Concelho* or district of Vila Nova de Ourem. Placed at the head of a vast canton, formed from several parishes where there was no mayor, but only a *regedor*, a sort of subordinate municipal agent, the “Administrator” enjoyed great authority.

Artur de Oliveira Santos, nicknamed “The Tinsmith”, because he directed the “forge of progress” inherited from his father, was the perfect example of the sectarian and anticlerical fanatic, a carbon copy of the radical socialists in France at the time of “little Father” Combes. Not overly cultured, but intelligent and energetic, very early on he launched out into politics, founding a small journal, *The Voice of Ourem*, as fiercely antiroyalist as it was anticlerical. An amusing detail, which gives us an insight into his personality, is that he went so far as to saddle his three children with the grotesque names of “Victor Hugo”, “Liberty” and “Democracy”.³⁸³

After the overthrow of the monarchy by the Revolution of October 1910, he became the henchman of the existing powers in this region, the people of which by an immense majority remained royalist and ardently Catholic. Having entered the Lodge of Leiria, he was promoted in 1913, at the age of 26, to the position of administrator of the *concelho* of Ourem, and before long, president of the municipal chamber and deputy for the judge of the district. Being himself founder-president of the Masonic Lodge of Vila Nova de Ourem, he was sure of the approval of his leaders and without any fear could exercise a veritable tyrannical power over the whole *concelho*. On the smallest pretext, he could arrest parish priests, forbid all acts of worship outside the churches or after sundown, forbid the ringing of bells, etc. In 1917, he was 30 years old.³⁸⁴

Such is the man who, in the name of Liberty and Democracy, would intervene vigorously to try to put an end to the immense wave of popular piety aroused by the apparitions of Fatima: first by intimidation, and then by brute force...

THE SUMMONS OF AUGUST 11

On Friday, August 10, Manuel Marto and Antonio dos Santos received an order to appear with their children at the “town hall” of Vila Nova, the next day at noon.

«This meant that we had to make a journey of about nine miles, a considerable distance for three small children (Lucy relates). The only means of transport in those days was either our own two feet or to ride on a donkey. My uncle sent word right away that he would appear himself, but as for his children, he was not taking them. “They’d never stand the trip on foot”, he said, “and not being used to riding, they could never manage to stay on the donkey. And anyway, there’s no sense in bringing two children like that before a court.”»³⁸⁵

The decision of Ti Marto was not without courage: «I will go myself», he declared, «and answer for them!» «My father thought the opposite,» Lucy continues. «My daughter is going. Let her answer for herself. As for me, I understand nothing of these things. If she’s lying, it’s a good thing that she should be punished for it.»³⁸⁶

«Next day (says Lucy), as we were passing by my uncle’s house, my father had to wait a few minutes for my uncle. I ran to say goodbye to Jacinta, who was still in bed. Doubtful as to whether we would ever see one another again, I threw my arms around her. Bursting into tears, the poor child sobbed: “*If they kill you, tell them that Francisco and I are just the same as you, and that we want to die too. I’m going right now to the well with Francisco, and we’ll pray hard for you.*”»³⁸⁷

Ti Marto, Antonio, and his daughter all left together. Lucy was mounted on a donkey, and she fell three times during the journey. Antonio, hard pressed by the fear of the administrator, went on ahead with his daughter. The Tinsmith began by giving a vigorous reprimand to Ti Marto for having come alone. Here is Sister Lucy’s account:

«At the Administration office, I was interrogated by the Administrator, in the presence of my father, my uncle, and several other gentlemen who were strangers to me. *The Administrator was determined to force me to reveal the secret and to promise him never again to return to the Cova da Iria.* To attain his end, he spared neither promises, nor even threats. Seeing that he was getting nowhere, he dismissed me, protesting however, that he would achieve his end, even if this meant that he had to take my life.»³⁸⁸

For the first time, Lucy had testified before the authorities: she had kept her composure and stayed calm. However, this day was a rude trial for her...

“I HAVE THE HAPPINESS OF SUFFERING MORE!” «What made me suffer most, was the indifference shown me by my parents. This was all the more obvious, since I could see how affectionately my aunt and uncle treated their children. I remember thinking to myself as we went along: “How different my parents are from my uncle and aunt. They risk themselves to defend their children, while my parents hand me over with the greatest indifference, and let them do what they like with me! *But I must be patient*”, I reminded myself in my inmost heart, “*since this means I have the happiness of suffering more for the love of You, O my God, and for the conversion of sinners.*” This reflection never failed to bring me consolation.»³⁸⁹

Lucy's two companions, who suffered with her in all her sorrows, helped her with all their heart. During this time, she writes, «they spent the day praying and weeping, in an anguish perhaps greater than my own...»³⁹⁰ Their affection for their older cousin, who spoke to Our Lady in their name, was so profound and delicate! In the evening, as soon as she returned to the house, Lucy ran to the well to meet them:

«There were the pair of them on their knees, leaning over the side of the well, their heads buried in their hands, weeping bitterly. As soon as they saw me, they cried out in astonishment: “You've come then? Why, your sister came here to draw water and told us that they killed you! We've been praying and crying so much for you!”»³⁹¹

Yet the persecution unleashed against them had only begun. For the Tinsmith, the intimidation of August 11 was a setback; now he had to find another way to prevent the day after next from being a new success for the apparitions...

II. THE EVENTS OF MONDAY, AUGUST 13

Since the previous day, «innumerable masses of people were arriving from all directions; vehicles of all types and sizes succeeded each other unceasingly. The cars and wagons stationed on the plateau, the long line of automobiles on the road, and the heaps of bicycles formed one of the most curious spectacles.»³⁹²

At Aljustrel, since Monday morning the seers were besieged from all sides:

«They all wanted to see and question us, and recommend their petitions to us, so that we could transmit them to the Most Holy Virgin. In the middle of all that crowd, we were like a ball in the hands of boys at play. We were pulled hither and thither, everyone asking us questions without giving us a chance to answer anybody. In the midst of all this commotion, an order came from the Administrator, telling me to go to my aunt's house, where he was awaiting me. My father got the notification and it was he who took me there.»³⁹³

THE ABDUCTION OF THE SEERS

The Tinsmith had indeed arrived at the Marto home around nine o'clock. He wanted to see the children. Olimpia, panicking, immediately called Manuel, who had left as usual to take care of his fields. Let us listen to his account, which shows the unbelievable effrontery of the sub-prefect, who this morning uttered practically as many lies as he did words...

«“So, Mr. Administrator, you're here too, then!” I said to him. “That's right”, he answered, “I too want to attend the miracle.” That made my heart beat faster. “We're all going together”, he continued. “I will take the little ones in my carriage... To see and believe, like St. Thomas, that is what I want.” Still, he appeared nervous. He looked around on all sides, and he said: “So, aren't the little ones around?... It is getting late. It would be better to call them.” “That is not necessary”, I remarked. “They are well aware of when they have to bring back the sheep, and prepare themselves to leave.”

«At that moment they came in, all three of them, looking just as usual, and the Mayor asked them to go in the carriage with him. The children kept

saying that it wasn't necessary. "It will be better that way", he insisted, "we can be there in a moment and nobody will bother us on the way." I told him not to bother because the children could very well go alone. "Then we'll go to Fatima", he said, "I have something to ask Father Ferreira." And we went, Lucy's father, myself, and the three children.»³⁹⁴

The archpriest of Porto de Mos was also present. He had in fact arrived at Aljustrel in the carriage with the Tinsmith himself, who had succeeded in persuading him that he too believed in the apparitions!

Around ten o'clock they arrived at Father Ferreira's house. Was he too deceived, or was he acting this way simply to avoid trouble? At the request of the Administrator, the priest consented to interrogate Lucy again. This is shown by the canonical process. On this occasion, Lucy would show a presence of mind and firmness in her replies worthy of Joan of Arc or St. Bernadette.

«"Who taught you to say the things which you are saying?" "The Lady I saw in the Cova da Iria." "Those who go about spreading such lies as you are doing will be judged and will go to hell if they are not true. More and more people are being deceived by you." "If people who lie go to hell then I shall not go to hell, because I am not lying and I say only what I saw and what the Lady told me. And the people go there because they want to; we do not tell them to go." "Is it true that the Lady told you a secret?" "Yes, but I cannot tell it. If your Reverence wants to know it, I will ask the Lady, and if She allows me to, then I will tell it to you."»

The scheming of the Tinsmith had succeeded perfectly. His carriage had been placed right at the foot of the stairway of the presbytery. Pretending to finish, he said: «These are supernatural things... Let us go.» In an instant, he had the three children get into his carriage, and the ruse had succeeded.³⁹⁵

«"It was all very well arranged", said Ti Marto. "The horse went off at a trot towards the Cova da Iria and I felt a certain relief, but when it got on to the main road, it made a sudden turn and the horse was whipped up and was off in a flash."

«"This isn't the way to the Cova", said Lucy, in the carriage. Then the Mayor tried to calm the children by telling them that they were going first to Ourem to see the priest there and that they would come back by motor

car.

«On the way, people began to recognize the Mayor's carriage and its passengers, so he wrapped them up in a rug to hide them from the curious eyes of the pilgrims who were by now flocking along the road towards Fatima.

«An hour, an hour and a half, and the Tinsmith arrived in triumph at his house...»³⁹⁶

«CERTAINLY, OUR LADY CAME»

This time the Mayor believed he had carried the day. At the Cova da Iria, he thought, nothing would happen, and this would be the final fiasco!

But Our Lady would show Herself more powerful than all his manoeuvres, and for the immense crowd of pilgrims – today there were between eighteen and twenty thousand! – the date of August 13 marked, on the contrary, their passage from doubt and distrust to belief. Maria Carreira arrived on the scene very early and gave this account.

«If there were a lot of people in July, this month there were many, very many more. Some came on foot and hung their bundles on the trees, others came on horseback or on mules. There were many bicycles, too, and on the road there was a great noise of traffic. It must have been about 11 o'clock when Maria dos Anjos arrived, with some candles to light when Our Lady came.»³⁹⁷

«Round the tree, people were praying and singing hymns, but the children didn't come and they began to get impatient. Then someone from Fatima came and told us that the Mayor had kidnapped the children.»

THE THUNDER AND LIGHTNING. «Everyone began to talk at once and I don't know what would have happened if we hadn't heard the clap of thunder. It was much the same as the last time. Some said it came from the direction of the road, others from the tree; to me it seemed to come from a long way off. Anyway, people had rather a shock and some of them began to cry out that we would be killed. Everyone began to spread out away from

the tree but, of course, no one was killed.³⁹⁸

THE CLOUD AND THE MODIFICATION OF THE LIGHT. «After the thunderclap came the flash of lightning, and then we began to see a little cloud, very delicate, very white, which stopped for a few moments over the tree and then rose in the air and disappeared.³⁹⁹

«As we looked around us, we noticed the strange thing which we had seen before and were to see in the following months; our faces were reflecting all the colours of the rainbow, pink, red, blue... The trees seemed to be made not of leaves but of flowers; they seemed to be laden with flowers, each leaf seemed to be a flower. The ground came out in colours and so did our clothes. The lanterns fixed to the arch looked like gold.»⁴⁰⁰

In short, everything happened outwardly as though the apparition had taken place. Our Lady clearly had not missed the rendezvous. She had manifested Her presence by stupendous, and even terrifying signs – the first thunderclap had aroused a moment of panic in the crowd –, and this time the signs were noticed by an immense majority of pilgrims. Manuel Gonçalves, from the hamlet of Montelo, could testify to Canon Formigao on October 11: «There were many extraordinary signs. *In August practically everybody there saw them.*»⁴⁰¹

So much was this the case that within the crowd people began to say to each other: «Certainly Our Lady came. What a pity that She could not see the children!» This only increased the anger of all these brave people, furious against those who had the audacity to deprive the Most Holy Virgin of Her usual confidants. Many set off for Fatima, shouting against those they believed were guilty or accomplices in their abduction: the Mayor, the “regedor”, and even... the parish priest!⁴⁰²

III. IN PRISON AT OUREM

In the Tinsmith’s carriage, the three seers, Francisco in front, and Lucy and Jacinta in the back, were no doubt prepared for the worst. When they arrived, the Mayor «shut them up in a room and declared that they would not get out until they had revealed the secret.» Seeing that it was past noon, Francisco said to himself: «Will Our Lady perhaps appear to us here?»⁴⁰³ But no! She would not come...

Shortly after, they were taken back for lunch. Senhora Adelina Santos, the Tinsmith's wife, treated them with kindness. After a good lunch, she let them play with her own children and even offered them some picture books to distract them. No doubt she wished to compensate in this way for the revolting injustice her husband had made them suffer. We also know that, without her husband's knowledge, she had had her children baptized! She also saw that the innocent prisoners lacked for nothing.

The day of August 14 was even more painful for them. According to Canon Galamba, they had to undergo nine interrogations in all! The Tinsmith wanted to extort the secret from them at any price, certain that in it he would find the key to the "clerical conspiracies" that, according to him, were behind it all.

First, an old lady tried to wrest it from them, but in vain. Then they were led to the Administrator's office to be interrogated separately. «He offered us money and showed us a watch with a golden chain», Lucy recalls.⁴⁰⁴ This was a new setback because the Tinsmith, all the same, had the honesty to recognize later on that he had not succeeded in surprising the children into contradicting each other.

Perhaps it was during this morning, or afternoon, that he called Dr. Antonio Rodrigues de Oliveira, a doctor from Leiria. Since he had not succeeded in discovering the "clerical imposture", could he not at least accuse the children of hysteria or hallucinations? The doctor assisted at several interrogations of the children and had them undergo a clinical examination. Although "O Mundo" and other Masonic journals had immediately put forward this examination, «what is certain», observes Costa Brochado, «is that nobody up to the present day has seen a single word of the conclusions which the doctor arrived at.»⁴⁰⁵ This simple fact is eloquent and does not need any commentary.

After new interrogations in the afternoon, the Tinsmith decided to use stronger weapons: to terrorize the children to finally obtain their confessions or at least declarations that he could make use of.

Then he had them led into the public prison. «In this room, which was very badly lighted», Lucy recalls, «were a great number of young thieves and other prisoners... They were polite with us.»⁴⁰⁶

«LET US OFFER IT TO JESUS, FOR SINNERS!»

«After we were put in prison (we read in the Memoirs), what made Jacinta suffer most was to feel that her parents had abandoned them. With tears streaming down her cheeks, she would say: “Neither your parents nor mine have come to see us. They don’t bother about us any more!”⁴⁰⁷

«“Don’t cry”, said Francisco, “we can offer this to Jesus for sinners.” Then raising his eyes and hands to Heaven, he made the offering: “O my Jesus, this is for love of You, and for the conversion of sinners.” Jacinta added: “And also for the Holy Father, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”»⁴⁰⁸

“WILL OUR LADY APPEAR TO US ANY MORE?” As for Francisco, the most contemplative of the three, what hurt him the most was to have missed the rendezvous with Our Lady:

«On that day, he could not hide his distress, and almost in tears, he said: “Our Lady must have been very sad because we didn’t go to the Cova da Iria, and She won’t appear to us again. I would so love to see Her!”

«While in prison, Jacinta wept bitterly, for she was so homesick for her mother and all the family. Francisco tried to cheer her, saying: “Even if we never see our mother again, let’s be patient! We can offer it for the conversion of sinners.

«“The worst thing would be if Our Lady never came back again! That is what hurts me most. But I offer this as well for sinners.” Afterwards, he asked me: “Tell me! Will Our Lady not come and appear to us any more?” “I don’t know. I think She will.” “I miss Her so much!”»⁴⁰⁹

Then they were interrogated once more, separately.

THE CAULDRON OF BOILING OIL

«Later (continues Lucy), we were reunited in one of the other rooms of the prison. They told us they were coming soon to take us away to be fried alive.⁴¹⁰

«Jacinta went aside and stood by a window overlooking the cattle market. I

thought at first that she was trying to distract her thoughts with the view, but I soon realized that she was crying. I went over and drew her close to me, asking her why she was crying: “Because we are going to die”, she replied, “without ever seeing our parents again, not even our mothers!” With tears running down her cheeks, she added: “I would like at least to see my mother.” “Don’t you want, then, to offer this sacrifice for the conversion of sinners?” “I do want to, I do!” With her face bathed in tears, she joined her hands, raised her eyes to Heaven and made her offering: “O my Jesus! This is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary!”»

“I’D RATHER DIE.” «The prisoners who were present at this scene, sought to console us: “But all you have to do”, they said, “is tell the Administrator the secret! What does it matter whether the Lady wants you to or not!”

«“Never!” was Jacinta’s vigorous reply. “I’d rather die.”»⁴¹¹

THE ROSARY IN PRISON. «Next, we decided to pray our Rosary. Jacinta took off a medal that she was wearing round her neck, and asked a prisoner to hang it up for her on a nail in the wall. Kneeling before this medal, we began to pray. The prisoners prayed with us, that is, if they knew how to pray, but at least they were down on their knees.»⁴¹²

«Francisco saw that one of the prisoners was on his knees with his cap still on his head. Francisco went up to him and said: “If you wish to pray, you should take your cap off.” Right away, the poor man handed it to him and he went over and put it on the bench on top of his own.»⁴¹³

After this moving scene, Jacinta, who no longer wept during the interrogations, as Lucy points out, began sobbing as she thought of her mother.⁴¹⁴

«She went over to the window, and started crying again. “Jacinta”, I asked, “don’t you want to offer this sacrifice to Our Lord?” “Yes I do, but I keep thinking about my mother, and I can’t help crying.”

«As the Blessed Virgin had told us to offer our prayers and sacrifices also in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we agreed that each of us would choose one of these intentions. One would offer for sinners, another for the Holy Father and yet another in reparation

for the sins against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Having decided on this, I told Jacinta to choose whichever intention she preferred. “I’m making the offering for all the intentions, because I love them all.”»⁴¹⁵

The lesson should not be forgotten: along with the desire of Heaven, the constant thought of these three intentions, which remain for us today more urgent than ever, was the inexhaustible source from which the three children of ten, nine and seven found the courage to face death! For there is no doubt that, in their candour, they took the threats of the Tinsmith literally.

“WHAT BEAUTIFUL DISPOSITIONS FOR MARTYRDOM!” With the greatest ingenuousness, Sister Lucy, who lets us see just how much she and her cousins believed the hour of their death had arrived, then relates the following charming episode. To listen to them, one would think one was right there in prison, witnessing the scene:

«Among the prisoners, there was one who played the concertina. To divert our attention, he began to play and they all started singing! They asked us if we knew how to dance. We said we knew the “fandango” and the “vira”. Jacinta’s partner was a poor thief who, finding her so tiny, picked her up and went on dancing with her in his arms!

«We only hope that Our Lady has had pity on his soul and converted him! Now, Your Excellency will be saying: “What fine dispositions for martyrdom!”

«That is true. But we were only children and we didn’t think beyond this.»⁴¹⁶

“IF THEY KILL US, WE’LL SOON BE IN HEAVEN!” Suddenly «a guard appeared, who in a fearsome voice called out to Jacinta: “The oil is boiling now: tell the secret, if you don’t want to be burned!” “I can’t.” “So you can’t, eh?” Then I’ll make you able to! Come!” “She left immediately, without even saying goodbye”», notes Sister Lucy.

«During Jacinta’s interrogation, Francisco confided to me with boundless joy and peace: “If they kill us as they say, we’ll soon be in Heaven! How wonderful! Nothing else matters!”

«Then, after a moment of silence: “May God grant that Jacinta not be

afraid. I will say an *Ave Maria* for her! Then he took off his cap and prayed. The guard, seeing him in this attitude of prayer, asked him: “What are you saying?” “I’m reciting an *Ave Maria* so Jacinta won’t be afraid.” The guard made a disdainful gesture and let him go on.»⁴¹⁷

Shortly after, the guard came to look for Francisco, then Lucy. Always the same scenario. The Tinsmith made a third threat: all three of them would boil together! Still he did not obtain the secret, or any kind of confession...⁴¹⁸

THE RETURN TO FATIMA. The next morning, after a final interrogation, he had to conduct the children back to Fatima. His manoeuvre had failed. When they arrived, the High Mass of the Assumption had just finished... Here are the testimonies written down by Father de Marchi:

«Someone asked Ti Marto about the children, to which he replied: “I know absolutely nothing. They may even have been taken to Santarem... Nobody knows where they are. On the day when they were taken, my stepson, Antonio, and some other lads went there [Ourem] and said they saw them playing on the veranda of the Mayor’s house. That was the last I heard.”

«The words were hardly out of my mouth when I heard someone say: “Look, Ti Marto, they’re on the veranda of the presbytery!” I hardly knew how I got there, but I rushed up and hugged my Jacinta... I just couldn’t speak... The tears poured down my face and made Jacinta’s all wet. Then Francisco and Lucia ran up to me, crying: “Father, Uncle, give us your blessing!”

«At that moment there appeared a funny little official, a man who was in the service of the Mayor, and he shook and trembled in the most extraordinary way. I had never seen anything like it! He said: “Well, here are your children.”»⁴¹⁹

When the people saw that the three seers were on the front steps of the presbytery, and the Tinsmith had taken refuge in a neighbouring tavern, some boys began to arm themselves with sticks, and had it not been for the calming words and accommodating attitude of Ti Marto, no doubt there would have been an ugly incident!⁴²⁰

The parish priest also, whom many parishioners suspected of collaborating with

the Administrator since the abduction of the children, was violently taken to task. Had not the Tinsmith come to the presbytery this time also? Although it was painful for the poor parish priest, the trickery of the kidnapper would have a most happy consequence in favour of the apparitions...

FATHER FERREIRA'S PUBLIC LETTER. Threatened by some people, and accused on all sides, the parish priest of Fatima wished to justify himself publicly.

«As a Catholic priest», he wrote, «I must refute with all my power the unjust and insidious calumny that has been laid against me, and declare before the whole world that I took no part at all, whether directly or indirectly, in the odious and sacrilegious act which was committed by the sudden kidnapping of the three children in my parish who assert that they have seen Our Lady.», etc.⁴²¹

Until then the Catholic press had kept an almost excessive reserve on the events of Fatima. The editor of the great Catholic daily paper of Porto had even seen fit to justify the abduction of the seers. As for the liberal press, it had published accounts filled with errors and lies, and even contradictions. They strove to explain these facts both by clerical imposture and the thesis of the «hallucination of the poor children!»⁴²²

It was the letter of the parish priest of Fatima which, providentially, was to make the events known to a larger audience, in an objective manner. It appeared on August 17 in *A Ordem*, the Catholic daily of Lisbon, then shortly after in *O Mensageiro*, the weekly of Leiria, and finally in the dean of Oliva's bulletin of Ourem, *O Ouriense*.

To exonerate himself and justify his apparent indifference in the eyes of the thousands of pilgrims, Father Ferreira had to bring up the facts. No doubt against his will, for he was thinking only of his own defence, many passages from his letter make an excellent apology for the apparitions in the Cova da Iria. They surely contributed to drawing a still greater crowd on September 13:

«Thousands of eyewitnesses can attest⁴²³ that the presence of the children was not necessary for the Queen of Heaven to manifest Her power. *They themselves will attest to the extraordinary phenomena* which occurred to confirm their faith...

«The Blessed Virgin has no need of the parish priest in order to manifest Her goodness, and the enemies of religion need not tarnish the striking manifestations of Her benevolence by attributing the faith of the people to the presence or otherwise of the parish priest. Faith is a gift of God and not of the priests. This is the true motive of my absence and apparent indifference to *such a sublime and marvellous event...*

«I will abstain from giving an account of the phenomena produced at the place of the apparitions... because the press has certainly published them sufficiently.»⁴²⁴

Whatever may have been the motives which moved the parish priest of Fatima to write this letter, at least it bears witness to the immense impression felt by all the pilgrims on August 13, at the sight of great signs which they had seen. Without his wishing it, the letter gave the event an even greater impact.

IV. THE APPARITION AT “VALINHOS”

On Sunday, August 19, after the parish Mass, the three shepherds, accompanied by a few people, left for the Cova da Iria to recite the Rosary there. In the afternoon, Lucy and Francisco, along with John, his slightly older brother, set out for Valinhos to pasture their sheep. Of all places of pasture it was the nearest and the most abundant in grass, midway in height between Aljustrel and the summit of the Cabeço.

THE UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER. Here is how Sister Lucy related the unexpected apparition, which filled them with an immense joy: «Since at that time I still did not know how to count the days of the month, it is possible that I am mistaken, but I think it was the day we returned from Vila Nova de Ourem...⁴²⁵ I felt something supernatural approaching and enveloping us.⁴²⁶ Suspecting that Our Lady was about to appear to us, and feeling sorry that Jacinta was not there to see Her, we asked her brother John to go look for her.»⁴²⁷

«What a pity, said Francisco, «if Jacinta does not arrive on time!» John, however, wanted to remain, so that he too could see Our Lady! Then Lucy, who had two coins on her, had an idea: «I'll give you money if you go and fetch Jacinta. Look, here's something for you and you can have some more when you

get back!» He left in all haste as Francisco called out to him: «Tell her Our Lady is rushing over!»⁴²⁸ It was about four in the afternoon.

A marvellous detail, which moved Ti Marto very much when he heard it, was that Our Lady had patiently waited for his little Jacinta... «In the meantime», Lucy continues, «Francisco and I saw the flash of light, which we called lightning. Jacinta arrived, and a moment later, we saw Our Lady on a holm oak tree.»⁴²⁹

THE DIALOGUE WITH OUR LADY⁴³⁰

TOWARDS OCTOBER 13...

– *What does Your Grace want of me?*

– *I want you to continue going to the Cova da Iria on the 13th, and to continue praying the Rosary every day. In the last month, I will work a miracle so that all may believe. If you had not been taken away to the City⁴³¹, the miracle would have been even greater. Saint Joseph will come with the Child Jesus, to give peace to the world. Our Lord will come to bless the people. Our Lady of the Rosary and Our Lady of Sorrows will also come.*⁴³²

THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY.

– *What do you want done with the money that the people leave in the Cova da Iria?*⁴³³

– *Have two litters made. One is to be carried by you and Jacinta and two other girls dressed in white; the other one is to be carried by Francisco and three other boys. The money from the litters is for the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.*

*What is left over will help towards the construction of a chapel that is to be built here.*⁴³⁴

– *I would like to ask you to cure some sick persons.*

– ***Yes, I will cure some of them during the year.***

[«*Then looking sad, Our Lady said:*

– ***Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners; for many souls go to hell because there are none to sacrifice themselves and pray for them.***]

«And She began to ascend as usual towards the east.»⁴³⁵

“I OPENED MY EYES AS BEST I COULD.” John had been present at the apparition. That evening, he recounted to his mother: «“I saw Lucy, Francisco and Jacinta kneel down near the tree. Then I heard what Lucy said. When she said: ‘*There She goes! Look, Jacinta!*’ I heard a clap of thunder similar to the firing of a gun. However I saw nothing. Still, my eyes still hurt me for having looked in the air so long.” John had nevertheless noticed the modification of the solar light. Some other people from around the area also say that they noticed it. John himself, revisiting the spot one day, said: “I opened my eyes as best I could, but I saw nothing... I was not very wise!”»⁴³⁶

Thus only Her three usual confidants had enjoyed the sight of the apparition. Francisco, who had been so afraid that he would no longer see Her, was overflowing with joy. «Surely», he said, «She did not appear to us on the 13th to avoid going to the Administrator’s house, since he is such a bad man.» Jacinta also was so happy that she wanted to remain there with her companions for the rest of the afternoon. Francisco however wisely remarked to her: «No, you must go, because our mother did not let you come here to day with the sheep.» And to encourage her, he accompanied her all the way to the house.⁴³⁷ Their obedience was rewarded by a new prodigy.

«*THE ODOUR OF AN EXTRAORDINARY PERFUME*»

Before going back to Aljustrel, Francisco and Jacinta picked up a branch of the holm oak on which Our Lady had just rested her feet. They went back to the hamlet, with the precious branch in their hands, when they encountered Maria Rosa at the door, with some other people. Maria dos Anjos, who was present, described the scene to Father de Marchi:

«Jacinta, all excited, rushed up to my mother and said: “Oh, aunt, we saw Our Lady again!... at Valinhos!” “Ah, Jacinta, when will these lies end? Now you have to be seeing Our Lady all over the place, wherever you go!” “But we saw Her!” And showing the branch: “Look, aunt, Our Lady put one foot on this branch and the other on this one.” “Let me see, let me see,” said mother. When Jacinta gave it to her she sniffed and said: “What smell is this? It’s not scent and it’s not the smell of roses... nothing that I know. But it’s a good smell.” We all wanted to smell it and all found it very pleasant. Finally mother put it on the table and said: “It had better stay here until we can find somebody who knows what it is.” In the evening we couldn’t find the branch and we never knew where she had taken it.»

Jacinta had simply taken it to show it to her father in the evening, as he returned from the fields:

«Then Jacinta came in looking as happy as anything, carrying a branch, about this size, in her hand. “Listen, Father. Our Lady appeared again to us at Valinhos.” And as she came in, I smelt a most beautiful smell that I can’t describe. I put my hand out to take the branch and asked her: “What have you got there?” “It’s the branch that Our Lady stood on.” I took it and smelt it, but the scent had gone.»⁴³⁸

AFTER THE APPARITION

In view of all these proofs, Ti Marto believed more and more firmly in the apparitions. Like the patriarch Jacob marvelling over the dreams of Joseph, «he kept all this in his memory». No doubt Olimpia also believed in it, but without daring to avow it on her own, for she believed that the family was unworthy of such a favour. «If only we were worthy», she declared, much distressed, to a visitor on September 7. «But to think that my brother, Lucy’s father, does not even go to church, and that he drinks!»⁴³⁹

«My mother also began during this month to find a little more peace»⁴⁴⁰, Lucy relates. «It seems to me that from this moment on», remarks Maria dos Anjos, «our mother began to be shaken up, and our father also began to be less opposed to Lucy.»⁴⁴¹

V. THE MESSAGE OF AUGUST 1962⁴⁴²

Heaven was not accustomed to accomplishing prodigies that made no sense. The manifestations of the Most Blessed Virgin at Fatima were no exception. The miracles there are never astonishing *tours de force*, but rather “signs” that have a highly symbolic and mystical significance.

«IN THE ODOUR OF THY PERFUMES»

The phenomena of sweet-smelling fragrances are not rare in the lives of the saints. Nor is it surprising that Our Lady of Fatima, so prodigious in great signs, wished to manifest as well, the intoxicating sweetness of Her presence... Is there not a striking contrast between the terrifying phenomena of August 13, the thunder and lightning – reminding us of the storm in which God so often revealed His glory and power in the biblical theophanies – and these sweet effusions of a mysterious perfume, reserved to a few privileged souls?

No doubt we must see and recognize in this one of the most celebrated attributes of the Holy Bride, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, which our liturgy, completely inspired by Scripture, proclaims. For the perfumes express in an incomparable manner the irresistible charm and splendour of Her perfections. «Draw us, Immaculate Virgin, we shall follow Thee, *in the odour of Thy perfumes*», chants a Vespers antiphon of December 8. And Matins of the Blessed Virgin: «As a chosen myrrh, *You have spread a sweet perfume*, Holy Mother of God!»

Here again, the praise which the Church addresses to the Virgin is only an echo of the praises that the divine Spouse addresses to His Bride, in the Canticle of Canticles: «Come with me from Lebanon, my Bride!... How sweet is your love... much better than wine, and *the fragrance of your perfumes* better than any spice!... The scent of your garments is *like the scent of Lebanon*.» (Cant. 4:8,10-11)⁴⁴³

TOWARDS OCTOBER 13...

For the second time, Our Lady renews Her promise: «In October I will perform a miracle so that all may believe.» And She adds an important bit of information, which Father Ferreira’s report has preserved: «If you had not been taken to

Aldeia – this is referring to the town of Vila Nova de Ourem – the miracle would have been greater.» Yes, the crowd of brave pilgrims who had come on August 13 indeed had reason to be angry at the impious audacity of the Tinsmith. By this public act, acting in the name of the authority he held over a tiny part of the nation, he had affronted and outraged the Mother of God. Thus he contributed to drawing down upon his country a just divine punishment. Without this odious act, shamelessly committed by the competent public authority, would the great miracle of October 13 have been seen in all of Portugal? It is quite possible. What a lesson! What terrible responsibility for the unworthy authorities who deprive their people of the choice graces with which God wishes to fill them!

Another new element in this announcement for October 13: here, in addition to a miracle, Our Lady promises a multiform apparition of the entire Holy Family.

THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY AND THE DAWN OF THE PILGRIMAGE

Without Our Lady having asked for anything yet, neither an oratory nor a chapel, the pilgrims of August 13, in the enthusiasm of the extraordinary signs they had just contemplated, wished to manifest their gratitude. Maria Carreira had placed there a little table with flowers; there they placed their offerings:

«When the people in the Cova heard that the children had been imprisoned on that 13th of August, and when they saw those signs in the sky, you can't imagine how much money poured on to that table. The people pushed so hard all round it that I thought at one moment that it was going to upset. They began to shout at me: "Take the money, woman, take it and look after it; see that you don't lose any..." I had my lunch bag with me and began to put the money in that.»⁴⁴⁴

Since nobody wished to take the responsibility, Maria Carreira was obliged to keep the money, which was repugnant to her and greatly disturbed her. On Sunday, August 19, coming out of Mass, she had told Lucy to ask Our Lady what was to be done with it. Thus it was in her name that Lucy asked the question: «What are we to do with the money and offerings which the people leave in the Cova da Iria?»

The Blessed Virgin, always modest and moderate in Her demands, requested that

there be solemnized the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, which is celebrated on October 7. She asked for very little: let them make two litters which would be carried in procession by the seers themselves, aided by other children like them. Let us remark, however, that if the parish priest of Fatima had granted Her request, however small it was, this would nevertheless have been a beginning of an official recognition of the apparitions... This would only take place in 1918.

At Lourdes, the Virgin Mary had requested: «Let them come here in procession.» At Fatima, although in an implicit manner, She expresses the same request, which already prefigures the “worldwide route” of Her statue, carried in procession in almost all the countries of the world, and venerated by millions of pilgrims.

AND THE CHAPEL? However, when Lucy transmitted to Maria Carreira the response of the Queen of Heaven, the humble peasant who already cherished so much the blessed spot of the Cova da Iria was very disappointed:

«“Oh, Lucy”, she lamented, “I wish the money could have been for a chapel, don’t you?” “Yes, I do, but Our Lady told me that. We must do as She says.” “Lucy, do ask Her on September 13 if we can make a chapel, will you?”»⁴⁴⁵

A BREATHTAKING MYSTERY: THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

«Pray, pray a great deal and make sacrifices for sinners; for many souls go to hell because there are none to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them.» These last words, which Our Lady pronounced looking very sad, were certainly the ones that made the most profound impression on the souls of the visionaries. It is the precious pearl that stands out in the message of this day.

But what an astonishing affirmation! The eternal salvation of many souls really depends on our prayers and sacrifices? It is so stupefying that many theologians try to interpret in their own way these disturbing words, to diminish their significance.⁴⁴⁶

As for ourselves, let us be content to show how this doctrine is in perfect conformity with the purest Catholic tradition. Pope Pius XII firmly recalls this truth in *Mystici Corporis*: «There is an awesome mystery that we can never

sufficiently meditate on: the salvation of many souls depends on the prayers and voluntary penances of the members of the Body of Christ.» It is an unfathomable but also admirable mystery that such a close communion associates all the members of the human family with one another, for their salvation or for their loss. An oracle of Deuteronomy already expresses this will of God in all its force: «For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, *but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments.*» (Dt. 5:9-10)

Although the terrible part of this oracle was mitigated by the words of Ezekiel, who without denying family responsibility makes clear the role of individual responsibility⁴⁴⁷, the second part, on the contrary, was reinforced by the message of the Gospel and the Pauline doctrine of the co-redemption: «*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake*», he writes to his dear Colossians, «*and in my flesh I complete what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ for His body, which is the Church.*» (Col. 1:24) And this co-redemptive power conferred by Christ on the members of His body – in favour of their brothers, who are also redeemed – has no other measure than unbounded Love and the infinite price of the Blood of Jesus, our only and beloved Saviour: «One just soul can obtain pardon for a thousand criminals», the Sacred Heart said to St. Margaret Mary.

Rather than making unending calculations, vainly seeking to fathom the mysteries of divine predestination and human liberty, to reconcile the role of personal merit and the communion of saints, it is better to imitate the wisdom of the three little seers, who believed in all candour the words of Our Lady: Yes, many souls go to hell because they have no one to pray and make sacrifices for them. And they set themselves courageously to draw out all the consequences that flow from this fact.

The first consequence is that the opposite is also true: «Many souls can go to Heaven, thanks to our prayers and sacrifices.» Here is an immense field of the apostolate open to every generous soul. Who can say henceforth that his life is useless, ruined, sterile, when the most beautiful, the most useful and the only important supernatural work is proposed to everybody by Our Lady, and with what insistence!

«... *MAKE SACRIFICES FOR SINNERS!*»

Since the trials they had to bear were not equal to the measure of their thirst for saving souls, after August 19 the three little shepherds strove to find new sacrifices to offer to Jesus, «for His love, for the conversion of sinners and in reparation for offences against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.» Let us listen to these accounts of Sister Lucy:

“LET’S GIVE OUR LUNCH TO THESE POOR CHILDREN!”⁴⁴⁸

«*Jacinta took this matter of making sacrifices for the conversion of sinners so much to heart, that she never let a single opportunity escape her.* There were two families in Moita, whose children used to go round begging from door to door. We met them one day as we were going along with our sheep. As soon as she saw them, Jacinta said to us: “Let’s give our lunch to those poor children, for the conversion of sinners.” And she ran to take it to them.

«That afternoon, she told me she was hungry. There were holm oaks and oak trees nearby. The acorns were still quite green. However, I told her we could eat them. Francisco climbed up a holm oak to fill his pockets, but Jacinta remembered that we could eat the ones on the oak trees instead, and thus make a sacrifice by eating the bitter kind. So it was there, that afternoon, that we enjoyed this delicious repast! Jacinta made this one of her usual sacrifices, and often picked the acorns off the oaks or the olives off the trees. One day I said to her: “Jacinta, don’t eat that; it’s too bitter!” “But it’s because it’s bitter that I’m eating it, for the conversion of sinners.”

«These were not the only times we fasted. We had agreed that whenever we met any poor children like these, we would give them our lunch. They were only too happy to receive such an alms, and they took good care to meet us; they used to wait for us along the road. We no sooner saw them than Jacinta ran to give them all the food we had for that day, as happy as if she had no need of it herself.»

“WE WERE PARCHED WITH THIRST...” «Jacinta’s thirst for making sacrifices seemed insatiable. One day... we encountered our dear poor children, and Jacinta ran to give them our usual alms. It was a lovely day, but the sun was blazing, and in that arid, stony wasteland, it seemed as though everything would burn up. We were parched with thirst, and there wasn’t a single drop of water for us to drink!

«At first, we offered the sacrifice generously for the conversion of sinners,

but after midday we could hold out no longer. As there was a house quite near, I suggested to my companions that I should go and ask for a little water. They agreed to this, so I went and knocked on the door. A little old woman gave me not only a pitcher of water, but also some bread, which I accepted gratefully. I ran to share it with my little companions.

«Then I offered the pitcher to Francisco, and told him to take a drink. “I don’t want to,” he replied. “Why?” “I want to suffer for the conversion of sinners.” “You have a drink, Jacinta!” “But I want to offer this sacrifice for sinners too.”

«Then I poured the water into a hollow in the rock, so that the sheep could drink it, and went to return the pitcher to its owner. The heat was getting more and more intense. The shrill singing of the crickets and grasshoppers coupled with the croaking of the frogs in the neighbouring pond made an uproar that was almost unbearable. Jacinta, frail as she was, and weakened still more by the lack of food and drink, said to me with that simplicity which was natural to her: “Tell the crickets and frogs to keep quiet! I have such a terrible headache.” Then Francisco asked her: “Don’t you want to suffer this for sinners?” The poor child, clasping her head between her two little hands, replied: “Yes, I do. Let them sing!”»⁴⁴⁹

“THIS INSTRUMENT CAUSED US TERRIBLE SUFFERING.” «Some days later, as we were walking along the road with our sheep, I found a piece of rope that had fallen off a cart. I picked it up and, just for fun, I tied it round my arm. Before long, I noticed that the rope was hurting me. “Look, this hurts!” I said to my cousins. “We could tie it round our waists and offer it as a sacrifice to God.”

«The poor children promptly fell in with my suggestion. We then set about dividing it between the three of us, by placing it across a stone, and striking it with the sharp edge of another one that served as a knife. Either because of the thickness or roughness of the rope, or because we sometimes tied it too tightly, this instrument of penance often caused us terrible suffering. Now and then, Jacinta could not keep back her tears, so great was the discomfort this caused her. Whenever I urged her to remove it, she replied: “No! I want to offer this sacrifice to Our Lord in reparation, and for the conversion of sinners.”»⁴⁵⁰

THE NETTLES. «Another day we were playing, picking little plants off the walls and pressing them in our hands to hear them crack. While Jacinta was plucking these plants, she happened to catch hold of some nettles and sting herself. She no sooner felt the pain than she squeezed them more tightly in her hands, and said to us: “Look! Look! Here is something else with which we can mortify ourselves!”

«From that time on, we used to hit our legs occasionally with nettles, so as to offer to God yet another sacrifice.»⁴⁵¹

THE SPLENDOR OF SANCTITY

In this beginning of September, several concrete facts dated with precision show to what degree of heroic perfection the three seers, so pious, so mortified, had already arrived. As soon as they could, they took refuge in their dear solitude of the Cabeço, completely filled with the memory of the Angel. «How many prayers and sacrifices Jacinta offered to God in that place!» Lucy exclaims.⁴⁵²

However, from day to day, the most painful trial was the almost uninterrupted succession of interrogations, especially as they often came from the worldly, the curious or fanatical adversaries who wanted to bother them for no reason.

“IF THEY KILL US, WE’LL GO TO HEAVEN!” The Tinsmith did not give up, and he hoped to find a way to put an end to the great movement of popular faith aroused by the apparitions. No doubt at the beginning of September, he sent three of his henchmen to threaten the seers again:

«On a certain day, three gentlemen came to speak to us. After their questioning, which was anything but pleasant, they took their leave with this remark: “See that you decide to tell that secret of yours. If you don’t, the Administrator has every intention of taking your lives!” Jacinta, her face lighting up with a joy she made no effort to hide, said: “*How wonderful! I so love Our Lord and Our Lady, and this way we’ll be seeing them soon!*”

«The rumour got round that the Administrator did really intend to kill us. This led my aunt, who was married and lived in Casais, to come to our house with the express purpose of taking us home with her, for, as she explained, “I live in another district and, therefore, the Administrator

cannot lay hands on you there.”

«But her plan was never carried out, because we were unwilling to go, and we replied: *“If they kill us, it’s all the same! We’ll go to Heaven!”*»⁴⁵³

THE TESTIMONY OF A VISITOR, SEPTEMBER 7. The author of the following fascinating account is Dr. Carlos de Azevedo Mendes: «During July and August, we had heard about the apparitions at Torres Novas... At that time I was a young lawyer about to get married; I had anything but apparitions on my mind.⁴⁵⁴

«However, on September 7, with some friends, we decided to take a ride to Fatima.» After a visit to the presbytery, he came to Aljustrel. «The shepherds were in the fields. We could see them and talk with them.» And the jurist returned home entirely conquered by their supernatural charm. What is most important is that on his return he wrote a long letter to his fiancée, relating in detail his visit to Fatima. This text, which was drawn up at once by a direct and also qualified witness, has considerable critical importance for us. First the visitor traces a very lively portrait of each of our seers:

«Jacinta, so little, so timid, came near me. I was seated on a chest and set myself beside her. I assure you she is a little angel... Her head is enveloped in a handkerchief, with red flowers, whose corners are tied together in the back. The handkerchief is already old and worn. She wears a blouse, also somewhat worn, and her skirt, very large after the fashion of the country, is reddish in colour. There is the costume of our little angel.

«I would like to describe her little face, but I don’t think I’ll be able to do so sufficiently. The way she wears her handkerchief makes her features stand out even more. *The eyes are black, with a charming vivacity, and the angelic expression on the face has a goodness that seduces us – everything attracts us, I don’t know why.* Since she was very intimidated, we had enough trouble hearing the little bit she said in answer to my questions.

«After we had spoken for some time with her, chatting and even playing (don’t laugh!), Francisco arrived. He is already a little man, with a woollen cap upon his head, a very short vest, a waistcoat revealing his shirt underneath, and his tight pants. What a fine face for a child! He has a lively glance and a mischievous form. He answers my questions with a detached

air. Jacinta begins to warm up to us.

«Soon, Lucy arrives in her turn. You cannot imagine Jacinta's joy when she sees her! Everything in her was alive with laughter; she ran in front of her and did not leave her side. It was a beautiful picture...

«Lucy does not have impressive traits, only her glance is lively. Her features are ordinary and usual for that region. At first she too was reluctant,⁴⁵⁵ but soon I put them at ease, and they answered without embarrassment and satisfied my curiosity... I interrogated all three separately.⁴⁵⁶ All three said the same thing without the least alteration. The principal thought that I deduced from everything they said is that the apparition wishes to spread devotion to the Rosary...

«The natural air and ingenuousness with which they speak and relate what they saw are admirable and impressive... Francisco saw the Lady, but he does not hear Her...

«To hear these children, to see them in their simplicity, to examine them on all points, impressed me in an extraordinary manner and led me to conclude that *there is something supernatural in everything they say*. To find myself with them struck me with a strong intensity. Today, my conviction is that there is an extraordinary reality there which our reason cannot grasp. What is it? What is certain is that *I was so content beside these children* that I began to forget about time. *There is an attraction there that I cannot explain...*»

Next they went to the Cova da Iria: «All three knelt down. Lucy, who is in the middle, begins to recite the Rosary. The recollection and fervour with which she recites it impresses us. The intention of the Rosary is interesting: it is for the soldiers at the war.» And at this point the doctor quotes the little prayer taught by Our Lady on July 13, which the children were therefore already reciting.⁴⁵⁷

What our good jurist did not write back to his fiancée, and with reason, is vividly related by Sister Lucy in her Memoirs:

«On arriving at the place, he knelt down and asked me to pray the Rosary with him to obtain a special grace from Our Lady that he greatly desired: that a certain young lady would consent to receive with him the sacrament

of Matrimony. I wondered at such a request, and thought to myself: “If she has as much fear of him as I, she will never say Yes!” When the Rosary was over, the good man accompanied me most of the way home, and then bade me a friendly farewell, recommending his request to me again...»

Disappointed by the apparition of September 13, he came back however on October 13 and was definitely convinced by the miracle of the sun.

«Some time later (Lucy continues), he appeared again, this time accompanied by the aforesaid girl, who was now his wife! He came to thank the Blessed Virgin for the grace received, and to ask Her copious blessings on their future.»⁴⁵⁸



September 1917: The three shepherds near the holm oak tree of the apparition.

«I love God so much! But He is very sad because of so many sins! We must never commit any sins again... But what a pity it is that He is so sad! If only I could console Him!» Francisco. (IV, p. 129, 133)

A MIRACULOUS CONVERSION, SEPTEMBER 12. We have another proof of

the extraordinary supernatural influence of the children at this time. Sister Lucy relates the moving story:

«There was a woman in our neighbourhood who insulted us every time we met her. We came upon her one day, as she was leaving a tavern, somewhat the worse for drink. Not satisfied with mere insults, she went still further. When she had finished, Jacinta said to me: “We have to plead with Our Lady and offer sacrifices for the conversion of this woman. She says so many sinful things that if she doesn’t go to confession, she’ll go to hell.”

«A few days later, we were running past this woman’s door when suddenly Jacinta stopped dead, and turning round, she asked: “Listen! Is it tomorrow that we’re going to see the Lady?” “Yes, it is.” “Then let’s not play any more. We can make this sacrifice for the conversion of sinners.”

«Without realizing that someone might be watching her, she raised her hands and eyes to Heaven, and made her offering. The woman, meanwhile, was peeping through a shutter in the house. She told my mother, afterwards, that what Jacinta did made such an impression on her, that she needed no other proof to make her believe in the reality of the apparitions; henceforth, she would not only not insult us any more, but would constantly ask us to pray to Our Lady, that her sins might be forgiven.»⁴⁵⁹

The Blessed Virgin was faithful to Her promise, and at least once wanted to show it to them in a visible manner. Their insistent prayers, and all their sacrifices, so generously accepted or chosen, were bearing abundant supernatural fruits. The sudden conversion of this hardened sinner was the proof. Our Lady could be pleased with Her three confidants. The next day, appearing for the fifth time at the Cova da Iria, She told them: «God is pleased with your sacrifices. He does not want you to sleep with the rope on, but only to wear it during the daytime.»⁴⁶⁰ «Needless to say, we promptly obeyed His orders»,⁴⁶¹ Lucy comments. A marvellous dialogue, in which the ardent love and docility of the three seers shine forth, as they respond to the tender solicitude of their Mother in Heaven.

CHAPTER VIII

A WONDERFUL MARIOPHANY (THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13)

At dawn on September 13, all the roads leading to Fatima were crammed with people. Some curious ones, and an immense throng of pilgrims were walking to the Cova da Iria, reciting the Rosary. Around noontime, there were twenty-five to thirty thousand people waiting for the apparition.

«THE FAITH OF OUR GOOD PORTUGUESE PEOPLE»

«It was a pilgrimage really worthy of the name, a profoundly moving sight», a witness reports. «I had never in all my life seen such a great demonstration of faith. At the place of the apparitions all the men uncovered their heads and nearly everyone knelt and said the Rosary with evident devotion.»⁴⁶²

The moving account of Sister Lucy describes for us a scene which could have been taken right out of the Gospel:

«September 13, 1917. As the hour approached, I set out with Jacinta and Francisco, but owing to the crowds around us we could only advance with difficulty.»

“ALL THE AFFLICTIONS OF POOR HUMANITY.” «The roads were packed with people, and everyone wanted to see and speak to us. There was no human respect whatever. Simple folk, and even ladies and gentlemen, struggled to break through the crowd that pressed around us. No sooner had they reached us than they threw themselves on their knees before us, begging us to place their petitions before Our Lady.

«Others who could not get close to us shouted from a distance: “For the love of God, ask Our Lady to cure my son who is a cripple!” Yet another cried out: “And to cure mine who is blind!... To cure mine who is deaf!... To bring back my husband, my son, who has gone to the war!... To convert a sinner!... To give me back my health as I have tuberculosis!” and so on.

«All the afflictions of poor humanity were assembled there. Some climbed up to the tops of trees and walls to see us go by. Saying yes to some, giving a hand to others to help them up, we managed to move forward, thanks to some gentlemen who went ahead and opened a passage for us through the multitude.»

“HE SAW AN IMMENSE CROWD, AND HAD PITY ON THEM.” (Mt. 14:14) «Now, when I read in the New Testament about those enchanting scenes of Our Lord’s passing through Palestine, I think of those which Our Lord allowed me to witness, while yet a child, on the poor roads and lanes from Aljustrel to Fatima and on the Cova da Iria! *I give thanks to God, offering Him the faith of our good Portuguese people*, and I think: “If these people so humbled themselves before three poor children, just because they were mercifully granted the grace to speak to the Mother of God, what would they not do if they saw Our Lord Himself in Person before them?”»⁴⁶³

I. HEAVEN VISITS THE EARTH

«At last, we arrived at the Cova da Iria», writes Lucy, «and on reaching the holm oak we began to say the Rosary with the people.»⁴⁶⁴ Lucy recited it in a loud voice, and the crowd answered.

«A LUMINOUS GLOBE COMING FROM THE EAST TOWARDS THE WEST»

Among the numerous testimonies describing the marvels which Our Lady wished to accompany Her coming, the most detailed is undoubtedly from Father John Quaresma, who later on became Vicar General of Leiria. He had come there incognito, with a suit coat on, with two of his friends, Fathers Manuel do Carmo Gois and Manuel Pereira da Silva, in the same dress. All three were at a distance from the crowd, on the raised part of the Cova, observing events.⁴⁶⁵ In 1932, Msgr. Quaresma, in a letter to his colleague Msgr. Carmo Gois, recalls the prodigious event of September 13 in all its details:

«On a beautiful September morning we left ; Leiria in a rickety carriage drawn by an old horse, for the spot where the much discussed apparitions were to take place. Father Gois found the high point of the vast

amphitheatre from which we could observe events without approaching too nearly the place where the children were awaiting the apparition... At midday (solar time) there was complete silence. One only heard the murmur of prayers.

«Suddenly there were sounds of jubilation and voices praising the Blessed Virgin. Arms were raised pointing to something in the sky. “Look, don’t you see?” “Yes, yes, I do...!” There was much satisfaction on the part of those who did. There had not been a cloud in the deep blue sky and I too raised my eyes and scrutinized it in case I should be able to distinguish what the others, more fortunate than I, had already claimed to have seen... With great astonishment I saw, clearly and distinctly, *a luminous globe, which moved from the east to the west, gliding slowly and majestically through space*. My friends also looked and had the good fortune to enjoy the same unexpected and delightful vision. Suddenly the globe, with its extraordinary light, disappeared. Near us was a little girl dressed like Lucia and more or less the same age. She continued to cry out happily: “I still see it... I still see it... Now it’s coming down!”»⁴⁶⁶

... It then began to approach the holm oak of the apparition. Then the sun’s brightness diminished, the atmosphere became golden yellow, like the other times. Some people even reported being able to distinguish the stars in the sky. Lucy began to speak ...

THE WORDS OF OUR LADY⁴⁶⁷

TOWARDS OCTOBER 13...

– *What does Your Grace want of me?*

– ***Continue to say the Rosary in order to obtain the end of the war. In October, Our Lord will come, as well as Our Lady of Sorrows and Our Lady of Carmel. Saint Joseph will appear with the Child Jesus in order to bless the world.***⁴⁶⁸

[***«God is satisfied with your sacrifices, but He does not want you to sleep with the rope. Wear it only during the day.»***⁴⁶⁹]

THE REQUESTS FOR HEALING

- *There is a little girl here who is a deaf-mute. Would not Your Grace wish to cure her?*
- ***Our Lady replied that, a year from now, the girl would be better.***
- *I have many other requests, some for conversion, others for a cure.*
- ***I shall cure some, but others no, because Our Lord does not trust them.***

THE CHAPEL

- *The people would indeed like to have a chapel here.*
- ***With half of the money received so far, they should make litters and carry them on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary; the other half can be used to build the chapel.***

A CHARMING EPISODE

- *Then Lucy said that she offered Her two letters and a small flask of perfumed water that had been given her by a man from the parish of Olival. As she offered them to Our Lady, she said to Her:*
- *They gave me this. Does Your Grace want it?*
- ***That is not suitable for Heaven, Our Lady replied.***⁴⁷⁰

The fourth Memoir adds:

- ***In October I will perform a miracle so that all may believe.***

*Then Our Lady began to rise as usual, and disappeared.»*⁴⁷¹

AN AMAZING “RAIN OF FLOWERS”

During the time of the apparition the majority of the pilgrims had enjoyed a marvellous spectacle: they saw falling from Heaven a shower of white petals, or round, shining snowflakes which slowly descended and disappeared as they

approached the ground. Here are a few testimonies:

«Very high up we saw little white forms like snow in the air, coming across from the east to the west. One could say they were doves, but we could clearly see that they were not birds. On the slope, to the west, stood Father Joaquim Ferreira Gonçalves das Neves, parish priest of Santa Catarina da Serra... I turned towards him and asked him if he saw something. He said no. I indicated the direction to him, and suddenly he declared that he saw also.»⁴⁷²

It was an unheard of phenomenon, which the witnesses were not able to describe very well: «One might think they were stars», declared Manuel Gonçalves, from the hamlet of Montelo. Others spoke of a rain of white roses, which vanished at the approach of the ground.

A MYSTERIOUS CLOUD

The Blessed Virgin wished to give the crowd gathered around the holm oak where She was appearing, another sign of Her presence:

«A pleasant looking cloud formed around the rustic arch which dominated the little tree-stump. Rising up from the ground, it grew thicker and went up into the air until it was five or six metres high; then it disappeared like smoke that vanishes before the wind.

«A few moments later, similar curls of smoke were formed and disappeared in the same manner, and then a third time.

«Everything happened as though some invisible thurifers were incensing the Vision liturgically. The three “incensations” together lasted the whole time of the apparition, that is from ten to fifteen minutes.

«In his letter approving devotion to Our Lady of Fatima, the Bishop of Leiria declared this phenomenon “humanly speaking inexplicable”.»⁴⁷³

THE LUMINOUS GLOBE GOES BACK UP TO HEAVEN

Not everything was over with yet. At the end of the Apparition, when the

Blessed Virgin had finished transmitting Her message, Lucy exclaimed: «If you want to see Her, look over there!» And she pointed with her finger towards the east. Then once again the luminous globe having an oval form could be seen, going up into the air and leaving the Cova da Iria in the direction of the east. Here is the conclusion of Msgr. Quaresma's account:

«After a few minutes, about the duration of the Apparitions, the child began to exclaim again, pointing to the sky: “Now it's going up again!” And she followed the globe with her eyes until it disappeared in the direction of the sun.

«“What do you think of that globe?” I asked my companion, who seemed enthusiastic at what he had seen. “*That it was Our Lady*”, he replied without hesitation. It was my undoubted conviction also. The children had contemplated the very Mother of God, *while to us it had been given to see the means of transport which had brought Her from Heaven to the inhospitable waste of the Serra de Aire.*

«I must emphasize that all those around us appeared to have seen the same thing, *for one heard manifestations of joy and praise of Our Lady.* But some saw nothing. Near us was a simple devout creature weeping bitterly because she had seen nothing.

«We felt remarkably happy. My companion went from group to group in the Cova and afterwards on the road, gathering information. Those he questioned were of all sorts and kinds and of different social standing, but one and all affirmed the reality of the phenomena which we ourselves had witnessed.»⁴⁷⁴

II. THE MESSAGE OF THE SIGNS

Far from overwhelming the little seers with interminable discourses which they would not be able to remember, Our Lady showed an admirable pedagogy at Fatima. She contented Herself to humbly take up certain themes, all closely connected, and She repeated them from month to month, each time adding some new element. Thus on October 13 She repeats almost entirely, although in a different way, Her words of September 13. Thus it will be more fruitful to comment on Her last two messages at the same time...

Let us consider what constitutes the originality of this fifth apparition, that is the striking atmospheric signs which accompanied the coming of Our Lady and Her return to Heaven. To be sure, they were first and above all sensible proofs mercifully granted by Her, to convince still more the crowds of the faithful gathered in the Cova da Iria of the reality of Her presence. And in fact these signs would encourage innumerable pilgrims to return for the last rendezvous, to the point where there were almost twice as many, from 50,000 to 80,000!

But the miracles of Our Lord and the signs accomplished by Our Lady of Fatima are not only extraordinary facts which bear witness to their supernatural origin, they are also symbols rich in meaning, the sensible expressions of a mystery... Thus all the surprising marvels of September 13, which filled with joy all those who had the privilege of contemplating them, were like a language, the discreet and veiled manifestation of the Immaculate Virgin who during this time appeared in brilliant light to Her three usual confidants. And first of all, this luminous globe which preceded the apparition...

THE IMMACULATE ONE CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN

Yes, such was indeed the clearest conclusion spontaneously drawn by all those who had seen the mysterious luminous globe «slowly and majestically gliding into space, going from east to west», to descend finally on the holm oak of the apparition, before going back into space, in the direction of the east. The sign was simple, and its meaning was obvious to all: «*It was Our Lady who came!*» exclaimed Father Gois. And Father Quaresma explained judiciously: «The little shepherds had seen the Mother of God Herself. To us it had been given to see the means of transport – if one may so express it – which had brought Her from Heaven to the inhospitable waste of the Serra de Aire.»

Why insist on an interpretation so obvious it seems to go without saying? Because it permits us to shed light on a theological question which, until now, had remained in doubt, leaving us in a painful uncertainty: When the Virgin Mary appears, is it Her glorious body that manifests itself? «Of course!» answered certain theologians. «Impossible!» others retorted. Tanquerey upholds this impossibility in his *Précis de théologie ascétique et mystique*: «When the Holy Virgin appeared at Lourdes, Her body remained in Heaven, and there was only a sensible form representing Her on the spot of the apparition.»⁴⁷⁵

Well, since the principles by which they claimed to draw this bewildering conclusion remain very much open to question, it seems to us that the marvellous phenomenon observed by a multitude of pilgrims on September 13, 1917, permits us to shed a new light on the debate: Did not the Virgin Mary wish to manifest, with splendour, Her coming on earth and Her return to Heaven, in an aura of glory? Does not the other hypothesis, which would reduce this marvellous symbolism to a grandiose but misleading stage production, seem unworthy of the divine veracity?⁴⁷⁶

Yes, at Fatima as at Lourdes, much evidence allows us to affirm that Heaven visited the earth, the Virgin Mary descended in person in Her risen body to appear to the three shepherds, to transmit Her message to them, and comfort the innumerable crowds with Her invisible presence. Then She went back up to Heaven, resplendent with Light, always towards the east from whence She had come.

This last detail, very well attested by the seers,⁴⁷⁷ is still another symbolic trait rich in biblical reminiscences: Does it not remind us of the Spouse in the Canticle of Canticles? «Quae est Ista quae progreditur quasi aurora consurgens... *Who is She that comes forth as the dawn*, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army in battle array?»⁴⁷⁸

THE IMMACULATE ONE, ARK OF THE NEW COVENANT

During all the apparitions since June 13, many witnesses had noticed a thin white cloud, very pleasant to look at, forming above the holm oak. It remained there for the whole duration of the apparition, before gently going up in the sky towards the east, before finally disappearing. In August, almost everybody could see it. The same phenomenon took place on September 13, but in an even more lavish manner, since the unusual cloud formed and then disappeared three times in a row, during the ten minutes Our Lady had spoken to the children.

This mysterious cloud which enveloped the apparition, as if to manifest its presence while concealing it at the same time – does it not remind us once again of the great biblical theophanies? Certainly, for from the giving of the law to Moses on Sinai⁴⁷⁹ to the Transfiguration of Jesus on Thabor,⁴⁸⁰ the cloud always appears in sacred history as the symbol and sensible expression of the divine Presence. But how can we explain the fact that a creature – even the most

sublime, the Blessed Virgin – could manifest Herself in the glorious aura of a specifically divine attribute?

The answer is rich in mystical significance and is taught in the Gospel of St. Luke, by way of allusion but still quite clearly: through a series of hints that the exegetes have perfectly grasped, the Evangelist identifies the Virgin Mary with the Ark of the Covenant.⁴⁸¹ This Ark, hidden under the Tent, was like a movable sanctuary, the place where Yahweh had fixed His residence, accompanying Israel in its wanderings; and the Cloud manifested His presence. As soon as the Ark was introduced, we read in the Book of Exodus, «the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.» (Ex. 40:34-35) After the building of the Temple by Solomon, the Ark was solemnly carried in by the priests to the Holy of Holies. And finally, it is by the Cloud that Yahweh manifests that He is taking possession of His Temple, and establishes His abode there.⁴⁸²

Now the symbolism is clear: by manifesting Herself in the cloud in each of Her apparitions, did not Our Lady wish to signify to us one of the most sublime aspects of Her mystery? In these three clouds observed on September 13 and October 13, which also remind us of the triple incensation in the liturgy, the Immaculate Virgin shows us that She is the Abode and the Temple of God, the Sanctuary of the Holy Trinity, and the Ark of the New Covenant.⁴⁸³ In addition to Her message, it seems that at Fatima the Virgin Mary wished to teach us, in an incomparable synthesis, and in both a sensible and symbolic manner, all the highest perfections of Her personal vocation, already chanted for many centuries by the liturgy of the Church: «Ark of the Covenant, pray for us!»

THE IMMACULATE ONE, DISPENSER OF A SHOWER OF GRACES

As for the gracious shower of rose petals or snowflakes, the significance can be grasped immediately. The symbolism is so natural that the expression «a shower of graces» has become commonplace. For example, we need only recall the beautiful words of St. Therese of the Child Jesus who, planning to «spend her Heaven doing good on earth», said to her sister: «You'll see, it will be like a shower of roses.»⁴⁸⁴

At rue du Bac, Our Lady had declared to St. Catherine Labouré: «Come to the foot of this altar. Here, graces will be poured out on everybody who will ask for

them with confidence.»⁴⁸⁵ Is it not the same pressing invitation that Our Lady wished to express at the Cova da Iria, by the eloquent symbol of a preternatural rain? Unquestionably yes. And as if to encourage the pilgrims to come en masse to this blessed place, where She showered Her graces profusely, She renewed the same prodigy of this mysterious rain on May 13, 1918, and one more time, on May 13, 1924: this time Bishop da Silva of Leiria was at the Cova da Iria and could bear witness to it himself.

This incomparable series of wonderful phenomena, which in this month called to mind the sweet presence, at once radiant and merciful, of the Immaculate One – without any trait which might recall the awesome greatness and majesty of God, as on August 13 – filled the crowd of witnesses with inner joy and shouts of thanksgiving: «Everywhere one could hear shouts of joy and praise to the Virgin, Our Lady.» It is as if the crowd had received some reflections of the radiant apparition, contemplated only by the seers...

«*BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN AND HAVE BELIEVED!*»⁴⁸⁶

And yet, Msgr. Quaresma writes, «some people saw nothing at all.» «It seems that the proportion of those who saw nothing was about a third of the total»,⁴⁸⁷ Barthas remarks. Did Our Lady wish to try their faith? It seems likely. Far from favouring only the believers, or those who intensely desired to finally see tangible proofs of the supernatural character of the events, many of them did not notice any extraordinary phenomenon that day. The privation of this consolation was a hard trial for them!⁴⁸⁸ It remained for them to have blind confidence in the words of Our Lady, and to continue firmly hoping to be more fortunate on October 13; for She had promised since July 13, and repeated this promise to the seers on September 13: «*In October, I will perform a miracle so that all may see and believe.*»

III. WAITING FOR THE GREAT MIRACLE

The prodigies of August 13 and September 13, which thousands of pilgrims were enthusiastically talking about all over Portugal, silenced for the moment the scoffing of the masonic and anticlerical journals. After that, they decided it would be better to wait and see what happened on October 13.

At Aljustrel during this time, visitors of all sorts were looking for the seers: the pious pilgrims, the curious, fanatical adversaries, everybody wanted to see the children and interrogate them, if not tempt them, with wonderful promises or the most dire threats, to make them finally reveal the famous secret. This almost uninterrupted series of visitors presented some very painful difficulties for the families of the seers: by the middle of September, Maria Rosa and Olimpia had to resign themselves to selling almost their whole flock:

«At this time, my aunt and uncle, tired of the inconvenience of having people continually coming to see us and speak to us, sent their son John to take care of the sheep, and kept Jacinta and Francisco at the house. Not long after, they ended up selling the flock.

«Since I did not like going out with other companions, I began going out to take care of the sheep by myself. As I have already related, Jacinta and her little brother came to meet me, and if the pasture was far away, they would go and wait for me along the way.»⁴⁸⁹

«I can say that these were truly happy days for me. Alone in the midst of my sheep, on top of a hill, or at the bottom of a valley, I would contemplate the beauties of Heaven and thank God for the graces He had granted me.

«When one of my sisters would interrupt my solitude, calling me to come back to the house to talk to such or such a person who was looking for me, I felt a profound vexation, and I consoled myself only by offering to God this additional sacrifice.»⁴⁹⁰

It got to the point, Sister Lucy writes further on, that «one of my sisters did scarcely anything else but go and call me, and take my place with the flock, while I went to speak with the people who were asking to see me and talk to me. This waste of time would have meant nothing to a wealthy family, but for ourselves, who had to live by our work, it meant a great deal.

«After some time, my mother found herself obliged to sell our flock, and this made no small difference to the support of the family. I was blamed for the whole thing, and at critical moments it was all flung in my face.»

“ALWAYS HAPPY TO BE ABLE TO SACRIFICE MYSELF.” «I hope our dear Lord has accepted it all from me, for I offered it to Him, always happy

to be able to sacrifice myself for Him and for sinners. On her part, my mother endured everything with heroic patience and resignation; and if she reprimanded me and punished me, it was because she really thought that I was lying. She was completely resigned to the crosses which Our Lord was sending her, and at times she would say: “Could it be that all this is God’s work, in punishment for my sins? If so, then blessed be God!”»⁴⁹¹

IN ANGUISHED EXPECTATION

The total loss of the Cova da Iria, its pasture and the vegetables cultivated there, along with the loss of the flock which had to be sold, was an immense worry added to Maria Rosa’s shoulders as the fateful date of October 13 approached. After August 13 and its extraordinary signs noticed by almost everyone present, she had hoped that the following apparition would be decisive. But on September 13, she herself had seen nothing. Nor had her sister-in-law Olimpia and Ti Marto seen anything: «The good Lord, perhaps to give us the opportunity to offer Him yet another sacrifice, permitted that no ray of His glory should appear on this day; my mother lost heart once more, and the persecution at home began all over again.»⁴⁹²

«My family (Maria dos Anjos tells us) was much preoccupied. As the 13th drew nearer we kept on telling Lucy that it would be better if she did not keep up the affair any longer because ill would come of it to her and to us and we would all suffer because of the things she had invented. My father scolded her very, very much. When he had been drinking he was very bad, but he did not beat her. It was my mother who did that most...

«It was said that they were going to put bombs down to frighten us and the children. Some people told us that if it were their children they would shut them up in a room until they came to their senses. We were all very much afraid. We wondered what would become of us all and said so behind Lucy’s back. The neighbours said that the bombs would destroy our houses and our belongings. Someone came to my mother and advised her to take Lucy right away where nobody would know where she was. Everyone said something different and gave different advice until we didn’t know what to do for the best.

«My mother said: “If it really is Our Lady who appears, She might have

done a miracle already – made a spring come up or something. When it rains there is a tiny drop of water there but nothing more... Oh, where will all this end!” Only the children didn’t seem to mind at all.»⁴⁹³

THE STAY AT REIXIDA. At the beginning of October, Mrs. Maria do Carmo Menezes⁴⁹⁴ permission from the Marto and dos Santos parents to take Lucy and Jacinta with her to her home at Reixida, so that they could have an eight day rest. During this stay one of the most moving photographs of the two seers was taken. Very quickly their presence became known and the visits began all over again.

«Seeing this flow of visitors, and the fanaticism that motivated some of them, the generous hostess said to the little girls: “My children, if the miracle that you predict does not take place, these people are capable of burning you alive!” The little children, ever cheerful and pleasant, answered: “*We are not afraid, because Our Lady does not deceive us. She told us that there would be a great miracle so that everyone would have to believe.*”⁴⁹⁵



Early October, 1917: Jacinta and Lucy during their stay at Reixida, at the home of Maria do Carmo Menezes.

«Jacinta was a child only in age...» (Sister Lucy, November 17, 1935). «She often sat thoughtfully on the ground or on a rock and exclaimed: “Oh hell, hell! How sorry I am for the souls who go to hell!”... Then, shuddering, she knelt down with her hands joined, and recited the prayer that Our Lady had taught us: “O my Jesus! Forgive us, save us from the fire of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need!”» (III, p. 109)

“I AM CERTAIN THAT THE LADY WILL DO ALL THAT SHE PROMISED.” In this waiting period, so full of anguish, the seers showed signs of an extraordinary assurance. «Are you not afraid of what the people will do if

nothing extraordinary happens on that day?» Canon Formigao asked Lucy on September 27. «I am not at all afraid», Lucy answered firmly.⁴⁹⁶

«The rumour had spread (Lucy writes in her Memoirs), that the authorities intended to explode a bomb quite close to us, at the very moment of the apparition. This did not frighten me in the least. I spoke of it to my cousins. “How wonderful!” we exclaimed, “if we were granted the grace of going up to Heaven from there, together with Our Lady!” My parents, however, were very much afraid...»⁴⁹⁷

Let us not be too quick to smile at this anguish, which in hindsight it is easy for us to judge excessive... The era was a troubled one and passions were unchained... The bombing attempt, which four years later would blow up the little chapel of the apparitions, shows that not all the fears of the peasants of Aljustrel were illusory. Any fanatic could have done as he wished, and be assured of impunity...

It must also be remembered that the intimidation was also the policy of the Administrator, who was insistent in spreading the most alarming rumours to discourage the pilgrims (and who knows perhaps the seers themselves?) from coming to the Cova da Iria on the thirteenth.

«There was such acute apprehension at Aljustrel that hardly had dawn broken on the 12th when Maria Rosa jumped out of bed and went to wake her daughter, saying: “Lucy, we had better go to confession. Everyone says that we shall probably be killed tomorrow in the Cova da Iria. If the Lady doesn’t do the miracle, the people will attack us, so we had better go to confession and be properly prepared for death.” “If you want to go mother, I’ll come with you”, said Lucy placidly, “but not for that reason. I am not afraid of being killed. *I’m absolutely certain that the Lady will do all that She promised tomorrow.*” No one spoke any more about confession.

«In the Marto household things were more peaceful. Ti Marto was convinced of the reality of the apparitions and nothing could shake his faith. He awaited events with the utmost calmness.»⁴⁹⁸

“I’M LONGING TO SEE OUR LORD AGAIN!” As for Francisco, he was filled with joy because the Lady had said that on October 13 Our Lord would also come:

«“Oh, how good He is! I’ve only seen Him twice,⁴⁹⁹ and I love Him so much!” From time to time, he asked: “Are there many days left till the 13th? I’m longing for that day to come, so that I can see Our Lord again.” Then he thought for a moment, and added: “But listen! Will He still be so sad? I am so sorry to see Him sad like that! I offer Him all the sacrifices I can think of. Sometimes, I don’t even run away from all those people, just in order to make sacrifices!”»⁵⁰⁰

APPENDIX I

THE ATMOSPHERIC PHENOMENA FROM MAY 13 TO SEPTEMBER 13

The extraordinary signs noticed during each of the apparitions of Our Lady, from May 13 to October 13, are one of the most remarkable and specific distinctive traits of the miracle of Fatima. In no other of Her apparitions did the Blessed Virgin surround Her coming with so many spectacular and varied signs. To grasp their significance, it is important to set aside very clearly the great solar miracle of October 13. This was the only miracle promised and announced in advance by Our Lady, with this clear understanding that everyone would be able to see it: «In October... I will work a miracle so that all will see and believe.» Let us therefore set aside this particular miracle which we will cover later on, and consider only the phenomena observed during the previous apparitions, whose essential characteristic seems to have been that they were noticed only by part of those who were present. The apparition of September 13, in which there were more signs than ever, and the largest crowd was present, imposes itself quite especially on our attention.

THE FACTS: AN UNQUESTIONABLE MIRACLE

A NATURAL PHENOMENON? To ask this question is already to answer it. Indeed how is it possible to interpret as an ordinary physical phenomenon this luminous globe, majestically moving through space, in a perfectly blue sky without any clouds? How can we explain the cloud forming and disappearing three times in a row, above the holm oak? What physical cause can we assign to the mysterious shower of snowflakes, which disappeared as soon as they reached

the ground?

Now it is estimated that all these phenomena, which cannot be considered as having natural causes, were witnessed by two thirds of the crowd that had gathered at the Cova da Iria. Since there were between twenty and thirty thousand persons present that day, that makes a myriad of witnesses! Moreover, the fact that about a third of those who were there declared that they had seen nothing at all, irretrievably rules out all hypotheses based on any sort of natural explanation.

A COLLECTIVE HALLUCINATION? Next comes the hypothesis of a purely subjective cause: could it have been a collective hallucination? For anybody who has taken the trouble to give even the slightest study to what this ambiguous expression means, to explain the solid testimony of fifteen to twenty thousand people in this way is senseless!⁵⁰¹ Gerard de Sede himself, in his systematic attempt to eliminate all miracles, prefers not to have recourse to this explanation. He is content to elude the difficulty... simply by denying the facts!⁵⁰²

We must also point out a remarkable fact, which allows us to affirm with certitude that the testimonies of the immense crowds who saw the signs cannot be explained by any sort of auto-suggestion. *Indeed, many who had desired to see it saw nothing at all, while others, who were merely curious or even incredulous, were privileged to see the ravishing spectacle.* Such for example was Inacio Antonio Marques, a postal employee, who having admired the “rain of flowers”, was still not convinced: «I returned to my house, my mind preoccupied with the event, and looking for a solution... I did not want to believe in this apparition.» He had to go down to death’s door, and be healed *in extremis* by a miracle of Our Lady of Fatima on Christmas of 1917, before he would consent to believe in the apparition.⁵⁰³ This witness at least – and how many others like him! – could not have been under the effects of a sort of pathological auto-suggestion when he saw the prodigies he had related!

On the other hand, many others who already believed in the apparitions and hoped intensely to see a sign which would strengthen them in their faith, could see nothing. Thus for example José Alves of the hamlet of Moita, who was a fervent friend of the seers: «I did not see the signs that the others were speaking about. It didn’t even occur to me to take off my hat», he declared in 1924 before the commission of inquiry.⁵⁰⁴ Another example: Carlos Mendes, the young lawyer, so enthusiastic about his visit to Aljustrel six months before, returned

home on the thirteenth terribly disappointed: «At first, I heard people shouting, claiming they had seen an extraordinary light, petals falling from Heaven, etc. As for myself I saw nothing, and yet I was right beside the children.»⁵⁰⁵ Finally, Maria Rosa and Olimpia, who were separated by a short distance, noticed only the cloud which went up above the holm oak. As for Manuel Pedro, he declared in the canonical process that he had neither seen nor heard anything, but, he continued, «I heard talk of certain people seeing extraordinary things in the atmosphere.»⁵⁰⁶

In short, if it was neither a case of ordinary natural phenomena, nor of illusory phenomena which could be explained by purely subjective causes, only one solution remains...

AN UNQUESTIONABLE MIRACLE. Indeed, if we grant the thousands of witnesses the just credit that they deserve, we must conclude that extraordinary happenings indeed took place at the Cova da Iria, which can only be reasonably attributed to Divine Omnipotence. The reality of the miracle compels our acceptance as an undeniable fact. The astonishing disparity of perceptions is an equally undeniable fact. Far from placing in doubt the reality of the miracle, it merely renders it more mysterious for us, more baffling to our attempts at a scientific reasoning, so far does it go beyond the framework of our natural experience. For it is stupefying that in the midst of such a large and varied crowd, the majority of witnesses could contemplate the extraordinary spectacle, while the others would not notice anything abnormal – without this difference in perception corresponding to a decisive natural difference between the seers and the non-seers.

We must even add that among those who had the privilege of seeing, not all perceived these extraordinary phenomena in exactly the same way. Alongside Fathers Gois and Quaresma, whose witness we have already quoted, a little girl Lucy's age continued to contemplate this luminous globe moving through space, when it had already disappeared from the two priests' eyes. From his own vantage point, Canon Formigao, who attended the apparition for the first time, remarks: «*Some people observed the phenomenon longer than others.* As for myself, I did not see it, which troubles me.»⁵⁰⁷ Such are the facts, which are solidly attested, and which must not be distorted at any price, on the pretext of facilitating the rational explanation.

THE EXPLANATION: REFLECTIONS OF THE APPARITION?

How is such a disparity possible? It is a mysterious question. Let us point out, however, that the same question could be asked about the apparition itself, which only the three seers could contemplate, among a crowd of witnesses who could not perceive it. We might also recall that Francisco himself did not hear the words of Our Lady. If this fact does not cast doubt on the objective character of the apparition, which is undoubtedly the manifestation of a glorious body making itself present in the place of its appearance, it highlights to what extent the vision of this celestial being, naturally invisible, *is itself a supernatural perception*.⁵⁰⁸ In other words, the object which appears is of the supernatural order, and the subject which perceives it cannot do so without a sort of particular grace, which is also supernatural.

THE GLORIFIED BODIES AND THEIR MYSTERIOUS CAPABILITIES.

Rather than vainly scrutinize “the how” of these extraordinary phenomena which almost entirely escape us, let us look at them instead from the theological point of view. A consideration of the extraordinary perfections of glorified bodies is in fact very illuminating here. Although it does not let us explain how such a disparity of perceptions is possible, at least we will be able to discover the meaning of this disparity and the reasons for it.

The Gospel itself teaches us that the “spiritual body”, having become the perfect instrument of the person, enjoys the marvellous privilege of becoming visible or invisible at will, and even visible to some and invisible to others, in the same time and at the same place, as in the apparition to Saul on the road to Damascus. Thus, while our physical body, because of its pure materiality is always necessarily visible, it seems that the glorious body, the perfect instrument of relations with other persons, does not undergo this servitude and manifests itself only according to the decision of its free will. Thus, at Lourdes or at Fatima, while the glorious body of the Blessed Virgin was really present in a completely objective manner, it nevertheless enjoyed the power of manifesting itself only to witnesses chosen by Her, and to the exact degree that She wished.

THE IMMACULATE, THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, IS ALSO THE QUEEN OF HEARTS. Were not the atmospheric phenomena that accompanied each of the apparitions of Our Lady in some way the prolongations or secondary manifestations of the apparition to the three seers? Then it could be said that, in the immense crowd at the Cova da Iria, the majority had the privilege of

themselves participating in the wonderful apparition that ravished the three seers. It was like the crumbs from the table at a feast, and everyone could benefit from them in a special way, according to his capacity and the good pleasure of the Queen of Heaven, who is also the Queen of hearts.

Instead of beating our heads against an insurmountable obstacle to our feeble reason, let us rather admire, in the great light of faith, the unlimited power of Jesus and Mary, who are able to carry on a unique relationship with every single person! She is the Mother of all, and enjoys an unimaginable power of being near to each one of us, distributing to each one of us, according to our prayers and Her mercy, the particular grace that we need. Thus it is not impossible that in an inferior order, to some of those in this immense crowd gathered in the Cova da Iria, She may have given the sensible consolation of seeing as it were the folds of Her glorious mantle. To others She gave perhaps the still greater grace of a pressing invitation to believe without seeing, relying on the witness of others. For the signs given have their value for all, for those who saw as well as those who believe. Indeed it is not necessary for all to have seen; once the fact is solidly established by the testimony of enough people, it takes its value as a supernatural sign for all.

In October, as we shall see, the great miracle will be of a different nature. It will no longer be, as in previous months, a sort of gratuitous favour given to some and not others. It will be the striking, indisputable proof that all without exception will be able to see, in short the one great miracle promised by Our Lady on July 13: «In October, I will work a miracle so that all may see and believe.»

APPENDIX II

CANON FORMIGAO, FIRST HISTORIAN OF FATIMA

In spite of the prohibitions of the parish priest, Father Ferreira, a small number of priests (historians have discovered the names of at least eight of them), and a large group of seminarians were among the crowd. «The summer vacation was not yet finished», Canon Galamba tells us, «and we seminarians did not wish at any price to return to the seminary without seeing on the 13th this village of Fatima which the people were talking about everywhere, especially in the

neighbouring villages. So at four or five in the morning, we went on foot to see what was going on at Fatima. We came back fatigued, but happy. There were almost thirty seminarians from different seminaries.»⁵⁰⁹

FROM LOURDES TO FATIMA

Among these priests was the one who would become the most important instrument of the official recognition of the apparitions, and the first priest to propagate the message of Our Lady of Fatima.

Manuel Nunes Formigao Junior was born at Tomar in 1883. After studying at the patriarchal seminary at Lisbon, he went on to the Gregorian University at Rome, from 1903 to 1909. He emerged a doctor of canon law and theology. In 1908, he decided to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes.⁵¹⁰

It is important, even from the critical point of view, to understand how such a man became the first priest to be convinced of the authenticity of the apparitions of Fatima. He himself told Canon Barbas how it happened:

«In 1908, I returned to my diocese. As I was passing through Lourdes, I had intended to stay only three days. In a train station I came across an Italian pilgrimage on its return journey. Among them were three sick people who had been healed. I was filled with such great enthusiasm by everything I had seen and heard at Lourdes... that I resolved to stay longer.

«Thus I remained a whole month as a nurse at the Hospital of the Seven Sorrows. I thought to myself: “Here in Portugal a committee must be formed in each diocese, just as in France, to organize pilgrimages to Lourdes.” *Before leaving, I promised the Blessed Virgin to dedicate my life to spreading devotion to Her in my own country, especially by organizing pilgrimages to the Grotto.*

«When I was appointed professor at the major seminary, the study of certain new matters prevented me from keeping my promise. Alas! During the following year came the Revolution which persecuted the Church, and it became impossible to organize pilgrimages. Nevertheless, in July of 1914 I was able to lead an important delegation of Portuguese people to the International Eucharistic Congress. Right after that the war broke out, closing borders and making it impossible once again to carry out my promise to Mary.

«I was waiting impatiently for the time when I could fulfil this promise, when in 1917 I heard of the apparitions of Fatima.

«At the beginning, I was incredulous, and I must admit that when I went there for the first time, on September 13, it was to try and find a way to put an end to this fraud.

«I spoke with the seers, with their parents, and with the local people. *I was convinced that the children were not lying, that they were perfectly normal and sincere*, and also that nobody in their entourage was “coaching” them to say the things they did. Moreover, at that time, the majority of the people in the village believed them.⁵¹¹

«A few days later, I encountered Msgr. John de Lima Vidal, apostolic administrator of the Patriarchate in the enforced absence of Cardinal Mendes Belo. He told me: “Continue to observe and take notes.” Thus I went back to Fatima around the end of September and stayed with the Gonçalves family, from the hamlet of Montelo; hence the pseudonym I used for my publications.

«The vision of the “sign of God” on October 13 confirmed me in my belief in the apparitions. I began to wonder whether my mission was to bring the Portuguese to Lourdes *or to make Our Lady of Fatima known and loved*. You know what happened next.»⁵¹²

A WHOLE LIFE IN THE SERVICE OF FATIMA

What happened next was the publication of the first serious and informed works on Fatima,⁵¹³ active participation in the canonical process and the creation of the review “Voz de Fatima”. As a professor at the patriarchal seminary of Santarem, and Canon at Lisbon, he then founded the Congregation of Sisters of Reparation of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, in the same spirit as the Message of Fatima. We shall have more to say later on about this immense work. Canon Formigao died at Fatima on January 30, 1958, with such a reputation of sanctity that Father Alonso could conclude the biography he dedicated to him with an insistent request for the opening of the informative process in view of his beatification.⁵¹⁴

The credence that a man of this stature gave almost immediately to the three seers is still another weighty testimony in favour of their credibility, along with

that of the dean of Olival and Father Cruz, who were also unanimously considered level-headed men, and men of God.

After the apparition of September 13, having confided to Msgr. John de Lima his favourable impressions – although Canon Formigao himself did not notice any extraordinary phenomenon other than the diminution of the sun's light – he was charged by the latter in a semi-official manner to pursue his inquiry in the service of the patriarchate.

THE VALUE OF THE FORMIGAO INTERROGATIONS

In this spirit he returned to Aljustrel to interrogate the seers on September 27 and October 11. To assess the definite, although relative value of these interrogations, it is important to note that the replies of the seers were not transcribed word for word at the very moment of the interview. At the time the Canon was content to «take notes» which he later wrote down. We know that the interrogation of September 27 was put down in final form on September 29 and the other interrogations later on, before the end of 1917. This is still a guarantee of its fidelity, but it explains at the same time certain critical difficulties raised by several replies of the seers. This also diminishes the value of all the objections against the authenticity of the apparitions based on discrepancies in details, which are usually drawn from these interrogations, as though they were the only source of the history of Fatima.

Father Alonso, already revealing the conclusions of his great critical study, insists on their relative value, which must neither be minimized nor exaggerated. In short, they should always be compared with the other sources. «For the essential... although they almost always lose the folk characteristics of the people of the Serra de Aire, we may not believe that the Formigao documents essentially transform the contents of the true words of the children.»⁵¹⁵

THE FIRST SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR OF THE CHILDREN

Besides being a wise and conscientious investigator, Dr. Formigao had one additional merit. As soon as he was persuaded of the sincerity of the seers and the authenticity of the apparitions, he was able to step out of his narrow role as historian to exercise his ministry: with goodness and zeal, he became in some

way the first spiritual counselor of their souls. This was an immense source of comfort for the seers:

«His interrogation was serious and detailed (recalls Lucy). I liked him very much, for he spoke to me a great deal about the practice of virtue, and taught me various ways of exercising myself in it. He showed me a holy picture of St. Agnes, told me about her martyrdom and encouraged me to imitate her. His Reverence continued to come every month for an interrogation, and always ended up by giving me some good advice, which was of help to me spiritually.

«One day he said to me: “My child, you should love Our Lord very much, in return for so many favours and graces that He is granting you. These words made such an impression on my soul that, from then on, I acquired the habit of constantly saying to Our Lord: “My God, I love You, in thanksgiving for the graces which You have granted me.”

«I so loved this ejaculation, that I passed it on to Jacinta and her brother, who took it so much to heart that, in the middle of the most exciting games, Jacinta would ask: “Have you been forgetting to tell Our Lord how much you love Him for the graces He has given us?”»⁵¹⁶

In conclusion, we must quote the few lines in which Canon Formigao summed up his first impressions of Lucy, at the end of his first interview with her, for it is one of the most precious testimonies in favour of the seer: «Half an hour after the end of the interrogation of Jacinta, Lucy appeared. She came from a little property belonging to her family where she had been helping with the vintage. Tall and better nourished than the other two with a clearer skin and a more robust, healthier appearance, she presented herself before me with an unselfconsciousness which contrasted in a marked manner with the shyness and timidity of Jacinta.»⁵¹⁷

«Simply dressed like the latter, *neither her attitude nor her expression denoted a sign of vanity, still less of confusion*. Seating herself on a chair at my side, in response to my gesture, she willingly consented to be questioned on the events in which she was the principal protagonist in spite of the fact that she was visibly fatigued and depressed by the incessant visits and the repeated and lengthy questionings to which she was subjected.»⁵¹⁸

CHAPTER IX

«I AM OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY» (SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13)

On October 13 at noon, the hour of the apparition and the miracle, there were between fifty and seventy thousand people at the Cova da Iria. The whole population of Portugal was represented there. Many people among this multitude of witnesses gave their version of the prodigious events they contemplated that day. Their witness is an important historical fact from which we must draw all the consequences.

But the presence of these crowds, and the extraordinary reality of the solar miracle must not make us forget the apparition of Our Lady to the three little seers and the contents of Her last message. That is why, temporarily leaving aside the enormous mass of evidence that we have, in the present chapter we will content ourselves with explaining events from the viewpoint of our three seers and their usual entourage.

I. BEFORE THE APPARITION

“A... PERSISTENT RAIN FELL.” While long lines of pilgrims converged on Fatima from every direction, praying the Rosary and singing hymns, the rain fell with a gentle persistence. «The whole night and morning», a witness reports, «a thin, persistent rain fell, wetting the fields, muddying the ground, and penetrating with its cold humidity the women and children, men and animals, who were hurriedly advancing along the muddy pathways towards the place of the miracle.»⁵¹⁹

One had to be among the first to arrive at the Cova da Iria to be sure of having a place near the holm oak of the apparition.

«Since the 12th (says Maria Carreira), there were so many people, so many people... God knows how many! All these people made so much noise they could be heard clear to our house.»⁵²⁰ They spent the night in the open air, without the slightest shelter.

«Well before the break of dawn, they were praying, weeping and singing. I myself arrived at dawn, and I was able to get near the holm oak, of which only the trunk remained, which the night before I had decorated with flowers and silk ribbons... I was sad because it was the last time Our Lady was to appear, but at the same time it made me joyful to think of what the Most Holy Virgin was going to say, as we waited for the miracle She was going to work so that all the people might believe.»⁵²¹

THE DEPARTURE OF THE SEERS

“MY PARENTS WERE AFRAID.” Meanwhile, at Aljustrel, for the first time it seems, Maria Rosa was disturbed at the thought of the tragedy that might follow... if the miracle predicted did not take place. «With tears running down her cheeks she looked tenderly at Lucy who tried to comfort her mother while drying her tears. “Don’t be afraid, mother, dear. Nothing will happen to us I’m sure. Our Lady will do what She promised!”»⁵²²

«My mother», Lucy writes in her Memoirs, «her heart torn with uncertainty as to what was going to happen, and fearing it would be the last day of my life, wanted to accompany me.»⁵²³ Elsewhere she writes: «My parents were very much afraid, and for the first time they wanted to accompany me, saying that if their daughter was going to die, they wanted to die by her side.»⁵²⁴

However, Maria Rosa was troubled at the thought of disobeying her parish priest, who once again had recommended that she not go to the Cova da Iria. It was only the grave danger her daughter was in that made her decide to go, she later confessed before the commission of inquiry. For greater safety, she came armed with holy water, as Bernadette did after the apparition of February 14, 1858.

TI MARTO: AN UNSHAKEABLE TRUST. First they went to Ti Marto’s house. The crowd filled the whole house, for everybody, both the curious and the devout, wanted to speak to the seers. While Olimpia, who like her sister-in-law was impressed by so many priests “who did not believe”, feared the worst, Manuel Pedro remained supremely calm: «I am going because I have faith in it», he declared. «I’m not at all afraid and am quite sure that everything will go off all right!» The children, too, were quite calm; neither Jacinta nor Francisco were

in the least perturbed. But what a trial for them with all this hustle and bustle! They were undoubtedly about to go through the most exhausting day of their life!

Before they left, Ti Marto recalled, a lady from Pambalinho brought dresses for the girls and dressed them herself. Lucy's was blue and Jacinta's was white, and she put white wreaths on their heads so that they looked like the little angels in processions.⁵²⁵

A PATH THROUGH THE CROWD. «We left home quite early», Lucy continues, «expecting that we would be delayed along the way. Masses of people thronged the roads. The rain fell in torrents. On the way, the scenes of the previous month, still more numerous and moving, were repeated. Not even the muddy roads could prevent these people from kneeling in the most humble and suppliant of attitudes.»⁵²⁶ This caused Ti Marto to remark:

«“Come on, ladies, none of that!” For they seemed to think that they had the power of saints. After a lot of trouble and interruptions we at last arrived at the Cova da Iria.

«The crowd was so thick that you couldn't pass through. It was then that a chauffeur picked up my Jacinta and pushed and shoved his way to the lantern arch, shouting out: “Make way for the children who saw Our Lady!” I went behind him, and Jacinta, who was frightened to see me among so many people, began to cry out: “Don't push my father, don't hurt him!” The chauffeur at last put her down by the tree but there, too, the crush was so great that she began to cry. Then Lucy and Francisco made their way into the middle of it.

«My Olimpia was somewhere else, I don't know where, but Maria Rosa was quite close.»⁵²⁷



As for Antonio, who had led Lucy by the hand right up to the holm oak, he was separated from her by the movements of the crowd: «But from the moment of the apparition itself, I did not set eyes on him again until I was back home with the family that night.»⁵²⁸

AT THE COVA DA IRIA

“SHUT YOUR UMBRELLAS!” It was almost one o’clock in the afternoon and it was still raining. «Once we arrived at the Cova da Iria, near the holm oak», Lucy recalls, «moved by an inner impulse, I asked the people to shut their umbrellas and say the Rosary.»⁵²⁹

Up on the road, sheltered in their automobiles, all those who did not have the courage to venture into the claylike mire of the Cova witnessed a stupefying spectacle: «At a given moment», one of them writes, «this confused and compact mass shuts the umbrellas, uncovering itself in a gesture either of humility or respect, but leaving me surprised and full of admiration, for the rain went on insistently, moistening everybody’s heads, soaking and flooding everything.»⁵³⁰ Avelino de Almeida, editor of *O Seculo*, writes for his part: «Lucy asks them, orders them to shut their umbrellas. The order is transmitted and executed right away, without resistance... groups of the faithful kneel in the mud.»⁵³¹

II. THE SIXTH APPARITION OF OUR LADY

THE HOUR OF THE FINAL RENDEZVOUS. According to the watches, it is

already almost one thirty in the afternoon, that is around noon by solar time.⁵³² Suddenly, Maria Carreira relates, «Lucy looked in the direction of the east, and said to Jacinta: “*Oh, Jacinta! Get on your knees, Our Lady’s coming! I already saw the lightning!*”»⁵³³

Maria Rosa, who had succeeded in remaining there, near her daughter, did not forget to give Lucy a motherly counsel: «Look carefully, Lucy, make no mistake!» But Our Lady was already appearing over the holm oak, placing Her feet over the silk ribbons and flowers piously laid there the night before by the faithful Maria Carreira.

This time Lucy seemed to fall into an ecstasy: «The child’s face, a witness recalls, became more and more beautiful and took on a rosy tint, and her lips became thinner.»⁵³⁴ Jacinta gave Lucy a poke and said: “Speak, Lucy, Our Lady is already here!” Then Lucy came back to herself, breathed deeply two times, like someone out of breath, and began her conversation with Our Lady.⁵³⁵

THE LAST MESSAGE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN⁵³⁶

– *What does Your Grace want of me?*

– ***I want a chapel to be built here in My honour.***

I am Our Lady of the Rosary.

Continue to say the Rosary every day.

The war will end soon and the soldiers will return to their homes.

– *I have many things to ask of You: to heal some sick people and to convert some sinners, etc.*

– ***Some, yes; others no. People must amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins.***

Then, growing sadder: – They must not offend Our Lord any more for He is already too much offended.⁵³⁷

– *Do you want anything more of me?*

– ***No, I want nothing more of you.***

– *Then neither will I ask anything more of You.*⁵³⁸

DURING THE APPARITION. While Our Lady was speaking with Lucy, just as on September 13 the crowd could see the same cloud forming around the holm oak, going up in the air before it disappeared.

Another prodigy, which took place for the second time: when Our Lady went up into the sky, Lucy shouted: «She’s going! She’s going!»⁵³⁹ At this moment, reports Maria dos Anjos, «my mother smelled the same perfume as on August 19.»⁵⁴⁰ Then Lucy shouted: «Look at the sun!»

«THE DANCE OF THE SUN»

«Then, opening Her hands (Lucy relates), Our Lady made them reflect on the sun, and as She ascended, the reflection of Her own light continued to be projected on the sun itself.

«That is the reason why I cried out to the people to look at the sun. My aim was not to call their attention to the sun, because I was not even aware of their presence. I was moved to do so under the guidance of an inner impulse.»⁵⁴¹

It was at this precise moment that the crowd could contemplate the extraordinary spectacle of the “dance of the sun”. The rain had suddenly stopped, the clouds were quickly dispersed and the sky was clear. Let us be content here to report the facts briefly, since later on, using the statements of numerous witnesses, we shall present each of the phases of this wonderful prodigy.

Here is Ti Marto’s account of the event to Father de Marchi:

«We looked easily at the sun, which did not blind us. It seemed to flicker on and off, first one way and then another. It shot rays in different directions and painted everything in different colours – the trees, the people, the air and the ground. What was most extraordinary was that the sun did not hurt our eyes at all.

«Everything was still and quiet; everyone was looking upwards. At a certain moment the sun seemed to stop and then began to move and to

dance until it seemed that it was being detached from the sky and was falling on us. It was a terrible moment!...»⁵⁴²

Maria Carreira described the stupefying “dance of the sun” in the same terms:

«It turned everything different colours, yellow, blue, white, and it shook and trembled; it seemed like a wheel of fire which was going to fall on the people. They cried out: “We shall all be killed, we shall all be killed!” Others called to Our Lady to save them and recited acts of contrition. One woman began to confess her sins aloud, saying that she had done this and that...

«At last the sun stopped moving and we all breathed a sigh of relief. We were still alive and the miracle which the children had foretold had taken place.»⁵⁴³

The promise of Our Lady had been fulfilled to the letter: all had seen it. Maria Rosa herself, who being docile to her parish priest, had still feared that it was a diabolical intervention, could throw out the holy water she was armed with! «Now», she declared, «*it is impossible not to believe, because nobody can touch the sun!*» Here is a testimony that is as precious as the opposition of Maria Rosa had been tenacious and systematic from the beginning.⁵⁴⁴

THREE VISIONS IN THE SKY

During the ten minutes that the crowd witnessed the spectacular cosmic miracle, the three seers enjoyed a still more beautiful spectacle. The Blessed Virgin fulfilled before their eyes Her promises of August 19 and September 13. It was given them to admire, right in the sky, three successive pictures whose symbolic significance we shall make clear.

THE VISION OF THE HOLY FAMILY. «After Our Lady had disappeared into the immense distance of the firmament, we beheld St. Joseph with the Child Jesus and Our Lady robed in white with a blue mantle, beside the sun. St. Joseph and the Child Jesus appeared to bless the world, for they traced the Sign of the Cross with their hands.»

THE VISION OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS. «When, a little later, this

apparition disappeared, I saw Our Lord and Our Lady; it seemed to me that it was Our Lady of Sorrows. Our Lord appeared to bless the world in the same manner as St. Joseph had done.»

THE VISION OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL. «This apparition also vanished, and I saw Our Lady once more, this time resembling Our Lady of Carmel.»⁵⁴⁵

Before going on with the account of the events, and the end of this wonderful day, which was so trying for the three seers, let us pause a moment to comment on this final message of Our Lady at the Cova da Iria.

III. THE MESSAGE: A PRESSING APPEAL FOR CONVERSION

During each of Her last three apparitions, Our Lady had solemnly announced Her message of October: «In October, I will say who I am and what I want.»⁵⁴⁶

What does Our Lady want? If we can believe the first accounts given, those of the parish priest, Father Ferreira, on October 16, as well as that of Father Lacerda on the 19th, or the written account of 1922, the Mother of God without any introduction declared right away as Her most pressing request:

«MEN MUST NOT OFFEND OUR LORD ANY MORE, FOR HE IS ALREADY TOO MUCH OFFENDED!»

Such is in effect the most express desire of the Blessed Virgin, the one which made the most impression on the three seers.⁵⁴⁷ Let us heed Sister Lucy:

«Of all the words spoken at this apparition the words most deeply engraved upon my heart are those of the request made by our Heavenly Mother: “Do not offend Our Lord and God any more, for He is already so much offended.”

«How loving a complaint, how tender a request! *Who will grant me to make it echo through the whole world, so that all the children of Our Mother in Heaven may hear the sound of Her voice!*»⁵⁴⁸

Lucy wrote these lines in 1937. Did she still remember the enthusiasm with

which she proclaimed them right after the apparition? The fact was so remarkable, so obviously supernatural that several of the witnesses were visibly impressed:

«When the sun was back to normal, relates Mr. Carlos Mendes (this young lawyer we have already spoken of), I took Lucy in my arms to lead her to the road. Thus my shoulders were the first platform from which she would preach the message Our Lady had confided to her.

«With great enthusiasm and great faith she shouted: “Do penance! Do penance! Our Lady wants you to do penance! If you do penance, the war will end...” (In Portuguese, to do penance is equivalent to “being converted, returning to God, fleeing sin”, and not “performing mortifications”.) She appeared inspired. *It was really impressive to hear her. Her voice had intonations like the voice of a great prophet* (and Mr. Mendes is very insistent on this impression of the supernatural in the words and attitude of Lucy at this moment).

«Once we emerged from the great crowd, I sent the child back to her family.»⁵⁴⁹

In the great light of grace, the little seer had well understood. The message of Fatima is first of all «the complaint full of love», the «tender supplication» that «our Heavenly Mother» addresses to us, with sorrow: «Do not offend the Lord our God any more, for He is already too much offended!» It is the call to conversion, the call of John the Baptist, repeated by Jesus Himself: «If you do not do penance, you will all perish»⁵⁵⁰ – the insistent echo of which is also found in the Apocalypse: «Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me.» (Apoc. 3:19)

Sister Lucy has often repeated that the principal mission that God confided to her was to proclaim unceasingly this vibrant appeal of Our Lady to conversion: «I consider then», she wrote in 1941, «that God willed only to make use of me to remind the world that it is necessary to avoid sin, and to make reparation to an offended God, by prayer and penance.»⁵⁵¹

The second request of the Blessed Virgin is also very important and practical;

moreover, it is inseparable from the first, as the means is inseparable from the end that it alone can procure.

«*RECITE THE ROSARY EVERY DAY!*»

Sister Lucy takes pleasure in stressing this point: in each of Her six apparitions, “our Heavenly Mother” made sure to repeat Her request, always in the same terms, with the same insistence: «Recite the Rosary every day!» This shows how much this beautiful prayer, so traditional in the Church, is supremely pleasing to Her motherly heart.

Far from being a completely secondary and optional devotion, the Virgin of Fatima came to reveal to us that the Rosary is the most ordinary condition to infallibly obtain all the graces that we ask of Her. Yes, She is the Mediatrix of all graces, by the good pleasure of Her Son. But this outpouring of favours which She holds in Her Heart, She can only release on each of our souls, our families, our countries and the world, in response to the humble and suppliant imploring of innumerable Rosaries. If, just as at Lourdes, She willed to appear at the Cova da Iria holding in Her hand this blessed instrument, guide of our prayers, it was to show us that it is *the surest means, because it is the easiest and the humblest, of winning Her Heart and obtaining Her graces*. Such is indeed the message of Fatima, which on this point is only repeating and developing that of Lourdes, but with even more vigour.

We recall that on May 13, Lucy asked the apparition: «And will Francisco go to Heaven?» And Our Lady answered by laying down Her condition: «Yes, he will go, but he will have to say many Rosaries!» On July 13, on the subject of John, the crippled son of Maria Carreira, the Blessed Virgin expressed the same requirement, as a condition for Her favour: «... But he must recite the Rosary every day with his family, and he will be able to make a living.» In this conversation alone, Our Lady spoke at least three times of the Rosary. «I made some requests that I don’t remember», recalls Sister Lucy. «What I do remember is that Our Lady said that *they must recite the Rosary to obtain these graces during the year.*»

In 1970, Sister Lucy wrote several admirable letters to exhort the faithful to the practice of the daily Rosary. They are rich in doctrine and precise recommendations for meditating fruitfully on the mysteries of the Rosary. Let us

recall here only one phrase: «The Rosary is, for the great part of souls who are living in the world, as it were their daily spiritual bread.» To deprive them of it, inciting them to neglect or ignore this prayer, is to snatch from their mouth the bread of grace.⁵⁵²

THE LOVE OF A FIRM AND PRUDENT MOTHER

“ALL THE MISERIES OF POOR HUMANITY.” Since June 13, when sixty of the faithful came to attend the apparition, until this day of October 13, when there were perhaps sixty thousand – a little more or less, we are not sure – Lucy arrived at the feet of the Most Holy Virgin entrusted with an impressive list of requests: On this last day, she relates, «there were so many of them, so many! I was anxious to remember the innumerable graces that I had to ask of Our Lady...»⁵⁵³

AN EXTRAORDINARY FIRMNESS. What strikes us at the outset, if we consider the replies of Our Lady to all these requests, is their tone of extraordinary firmness. In all these responses, there is not an ounce of sentimentalism.

Our Lady here speaks the language of a mother who knows her children and what their true good is, while they themselves, poor and blind as they are, very often delude themselves, mostly desiring what would contribute to their ruin: material favours, the suppression of all crosses, and in short, the immediate satisfaction of all their desires.

On June 13: «I asked for the healing of a sick person», Lucy recalls. «*If he is converted*, he will be healed during the year.» On July 13: Maria Carreira, this exemplary Christian, animated by such a great love for the Most Holy Virgin, asked for the healing of John, her crippled son. «*He will not be healed and he will remain poor*. But he must recite the Rosary every day with his family and he will be able to make a living.» And so John Carreira kept his infirmities, but he nevertheless became sacristan of the “Capelinha”, and thus spent the whole of his long life in the shadow of Our Lady’s sanctuary. Rather than healing him, Our Lady had chosen for him a life full of suffering, prayer and service.

On August 19: «I would like to ask You for the healing of some sick people.» «Yes, I will heal *some* of them during the year.» And on September 13: «I will

heal some, *but others, no, because Our Lord does not trust Himself to them.*» These words may seem harsh, but their tonality is so much in line with the Gospel: «Many believed in His name, seeing His signs which He did; *but Jesus did not trust Himself unto them*, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that any should give testimony of man; for He knew what was in man.» (Jn. 2:23-25) No, Our Lady of Fatima does not have “confidence in men” any more than Her Divine Son! And if She said, «Our Lord does not trust Himself to them», of those who prayed to Her with their lips, but whose heart was far from Her, what would She say, a fortiori, of Her declared enemies who glory in their impiety?

“THEY MUST AMEND THEIR LIVES...” Finally, on October 13, Our Lady made the same response, full of sadness. Certainly, sickness is an evil, but She insists so that we finally understand: sin is a much greater evil of a completely different order, since it leads souls to eternal ruin! And just as Jesus said to the sick people that He healed, «Go, and *sin no more*», His Mother wishes us to be much more concerned with eternal salvation than the mere healing of the body: «I have many things to ask You: to heal some sick people and to convert some sinners, etc.» «Some, yes; others, no. *They must amend their lives and ask pardon of their sins.*» And taking on a sadder expression: «They must no longer offend God, Our Lord, for He is already too much offended!»

“TO OBTAIN THESE GRACES DURING THE YEAR.” Our Lady also wishes to recall to our minds another lesson of the Gospel, which is as important as it is little known. To obtain a grace, it is not enough to ask for it once in passing... We must desire it ardently and ask for it insistently, with confidence, without ever giving up. This is undoubtedly why the Blessed Virgin, responding to the requests Lucy had made to Her, promised to hear them, but not immediately. On June 13 She said, regarding a sick person: «If he is converted, he will be healed *during the year.*» She said the same thing on July 13: it is necessary to recite the Rosary every day «to obtain these graces *during the year.*» Finally, on September 13, regarding a little deaf mute Lucy was interceding for: «*In a year from now, she will be better.*» And on October 13, Our Lady responded to all the requests of Lucy by saying that «She would grant certain graces *during the year.*»⁵⁵⁴ What an eloquent lesson to encourage us to pray with greater perseverance!

“I WILL SAY WHAT I WANT.” To cease offending God, to amend our lives, to be converted, to faithfully recite the Rosary every day and ask Her with

perseverance for the graces we need, and first of all the grace of our conversion – this is what Our Lady asks of us, as She reminded us for the last time on this October 13. But She had made another promise: «I will say who I am.»

«I AM OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY»

Just as at Lourdes, although Her confidants had of course recognized Her right away, She did not wish to reveal Her name at once. Why this delay, why this mystery, if not to draw our attention still more to a name which, as is always the case in the Bible, is the concrete expression and effective evocation of the very mystery of the person? At Massabielle, Our Lady had not revealed Her name until March 25, at the sixteenth apparition: «I am the Immaculate Conception.» And, observed Bernadette, «these are the last words She spoke to me.»⁵⁵⁵ At Fatima as well, She did not reveal Her name until the last of Her appearances: «I am Our Lady of the Rosary.» This name calls to mind a whole mystery which we shall explore little by little.

“A CHAPEL IN MY HONOUR.” For the first time, in one simple phrase, but in the most explicit and formal manner, She asked for the creation of a pilgrimage in the place where She had visited the earth.⁵⁵⁶ «I want a chapel to be built here in My honour. I am Our Lady of the Rosary.»

Let us admire the immense modesty of these words, which established the pilgrimage. Canon Formigao himself is astonished at them... On the evening of October 13, he asks Lucy: «Did Our Lady say She wanted many people to come, from everywhere?» «No, She didn't order anyone to come here»,⁵⁵⁷ is the answer. «Go tell the priests to have a chapel built here», the Immaculate had asked Bernadette on March 2, 1858. At Fatima it is the same request, marked by the same charming discretion, without there even being any mention of the clergy: «I want a chapel to be built here in My honour.» And that is all! What modesty... but also what power! To draw the crowds to the place She had chosen, She has other means, much more divine and efficacious than grandiose, wordy appeals: Her irresistible attractions, which in a few years would lead the whole good Portuguese people to Her feet, in spite of the opposition of the government and indifference of the priests, are the prodigies and graces that flow profusively from Her motherly hands, on all the pilgrims at the Cova da Iria.

Barely one year later, Her request will be fulfilled; but ever so modestly, and

without the help of the parish priest! It was due purely to the initiative of a humble peasant, Maria Carreira. On August 6, 1918, construction was begun on a small commemorative chapel, the “Capelinha”, built on the very spot of the apparitions. Since that time, at Aljustrel, Maria Carreira was known by the charming and well merited nickname of “Maria de Capelinha”. And on May 13, 1928, the cornerstone of the great basilica of the Rosary was laid by the Archbishop of Evora.

THREE LIVING IMAGES OF THE MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY.

Undoubtedly, the title «Our Lady of the Rosary», chosen by the Virgin of Fatima, most clearly explains the astonishing multiform vision that the seers enjoyed while the crowd witnessed the great miracle of the sun. Do not the three successive visions that passed before their dazzled eyes remind us of the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries of our Rosary?

To illustrate the *joyful mysteries*, first appears *the Holy Family*: St. Joseph and the Child Jesus blessing the world, and on the left, Our Lady, such as She appeared on the holm oak.

Then «the light changed and suddenly the Virgin appeared as *Our Lady of Sorrows*. St. Joseph was replaced by Our Lord, who blessed the multitude.»⁵⁵⁸ On the evening of October 13, Lucy declared to Canon Formigao: «Our Lady appeared dressed like Our Lady of Sorrows, but without the sword in Her heart.»⁵⁵⁹ Our Lord appeared in His adulthood, dressed in red, no doubt to remind us of the purple mantle in which He was dressed in the praetorium, during the scene of the outrages and the crowning with thorns.⁵⁶⁰

Finally, corresponding to *the glorious mysteries*, Lucy could see *Our Lady of Mount Carmel*. «Why did you say that the Lady at one moment seemed to be dressed like Our Lady of Mount Carmel?» Canon Formigao asked Lucy on the evening of October 13. «Because She had something hanging from Her hand», she answered. Thus She was holding the scapular in Her hand, just as She had held the Rosary in all Her previous apparitions. We will return later to this important detail.

OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY, QUEEN OF PEACE. If the title chosen by Our Lady of Fatima is reminiscent of the three sets of mysteries in Her life, the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries, it also reminds us of Her powerful intervention in the life of the Church and defence of Christendom. Surely this is

even the most specific character of this Marian title. Since the time of St. Dominic, since the time of St. Pius and the victory of Lepanto, on October 7, 1571, which was miraculously repeated in 1716 at the walls of Vienna, Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary is invoked as the rampart of Christendom under assault, the final recourse in the greatest perils. At Fatima, Our Lady came to reveal that She is the only dispensatrix of the gift of peace. We will see that this is even one of the essential points of Her great secret.

Our Lady wills that we obtain this peace, which She alone can grant, through the Rosary. On May 13, She said to the shepherds: «Recite *the Rosary* every day to obtain peace for the world, and *the end of the war*.» On July 13: «Continue to recite *the Rosary* every day in honour of Our Lady of the Rosary, to obtain peace for the world and *the end of the war*, because She alone can help you.» Again on September 13: «Continue to recite *the Rosary* to obtain *the end of the war*.» Finally on October 13, Our Lady once again associates the obtaining of peace with the recitation of the Rosary, as one of its essential conditions. «Continue to recite *the Rosary* every day. *The war will end* and the soldiers will return home soon.»

Here is an important lesson that we must remember: Heaven cannot grant true peace to the impious nations in revolt against it, to a proud world which refuses to implore Mary, the universal Mediatrix of God's graces. More concretely, the conversion of hearts and the daily recitation of the Rosary are essential conditions for peace, imposed by God in His just Mercy. This is the essence of the message of October 13 which Lucy recalled again in 1940, at the moment when the world was suffering the horrible chastisement of the Second World War:

«It would be good if we could inculcate in people at the same time as a great confidence in the Mercy of Our Good God and in the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, *the necessity of prayer accompanied by sacrifices, especially those which are necessary to avoid sin*.

«This is the request of Our Good Mother in Heaven since 1917. This request came from Her Immaculate Heart with an inexpressible sadness and tenderness: “*Do not offend the Lord our God any more, for He is already too much offended!*” What a pity that nobody has meditated on these words, and grasped their whole significance!»⁵⁶¹



October 1917: The three seers, in the company of pilgrims from Vila Nova de Ourem, under the porch built by the Carreira family to mark the location of the apparition.

«Almost every day, people went to the Cova da Iria to implore the protection of our heavenly Mother. Everyone wanted to see the seers, to put questions to them, and to recite the Rosary with them.

«At times, I was so tired of saying the same thing over and over again, and also of praying, that I looked for any pretext for excusing myself and making my escape. But those poor people were so insistent, that I had to make an effort, and indeed no small effort, in order to satisfy them. I then repeated my usual prayer deep down in my heart: “O my God, it is for love of You, in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for the conversion of sinners, and for the Holy Father”.» (II, p. 82-83).

APPENDIX I

THE MULTIFORM VISION

On the evening of October 13, Canon Formigao wished to interrogate the three seers separately. He managed to do so, once he was able to drag them away from the crowds of curious people, not without difficulty.

One episode of this interrogation, concerning the threefold vision in the sky enjoyed by the seers during the dance of the sun, deserves to be quoted.

«“All these apparitions came at the same time, did they not?” asked the Canon, setting a trap for Lucy.

«From the beginning I had had a presentiment that the apparitions were true, he recounts. Thus I confess that I was almost trembling when I asked this question, and that I had to make an effort to state my question in an affirmative tone. Although it would not have been, strictly speaking, impossible for the children to have had a simultaneous vision of the three Images of the Blessed Virgin, it would clearly have created a serious difficulty.

«“No”, Lucy answered. “First I saw Our Lady of the Rosary, then St. Joseph and the Holy Child. After that I saw Our Lord, then Our Lady of Sorrows, and at the end what I think was Our Lady of Mount j Carmel.”»⁵⁶²

The threefold vision promised by Our Lady on August 19 and September 13 is thus firmly attested on the evening of the apparition. However, again according to the Formigao interrogations of October 13 and 19, although the majority of authors pass over this fact in silence, it seems that Jacinta and Francisco only saw the first phase of this heavenly apparition, that of the Holy Family. The last two were contemplated by Lucy alone. This difference would not be astonishing and would not surprise us, since we already know that Francisco did not hear the voice of Our Lady at any of Her apparitions, and that from June 13 to September 13, many pilgrims had not been able to see the striking signs observed by the others.⁵⁶³

The adversaries of Fatima have not failed to stress – no doubt to divert attention from their total disarray when faced with the unquestionable fact of the miracle of the sun – that the descriptions of the vision seen by the three children present numerous variations, and even several doubts or contradictions on details. Thus in the vision of the Holy Family, according to Lucy, the Child Jesus was «in the arms of St. Joseph», while according to Jacinta and Francisco He was «standing next to him». But in such a case the contradiction can only be apparent, and can

only come from the misunderstanding of such and such an expression of the interrogator, or an inability of the children to explain themselves with precision.

If the Child Jesus was next to St. Joseph, but was nevertheless «supported by him», we understand why Lucy could answer that He was «in his arms», and Jacinta could say on the contrary that He was «standing next to him», to signify that He was not «around his neck», like a child in the bosom of his mother.⁵⁶⁴ Moreover Jacinta herself, although she says that the Child Jesus was standing, declared that she did not see St. Joseph's right arm.⁵⁶⁵

We may hope that the great critical study of Father Alonso, in confronting all the sources and also using the replies of Lucy to new, more precise interrogations, will unquestionably permit us to clarify the majority of difficulties of this kind.

Let us also point out that the rapid succession of these living images which replaced each other, one after the other, in the dazzling light, partly explains the difficulty Lucy experienced in making a firm and precise description. Let us not forget, after all, that she was only ten! Even with her usual good memory, the means of expression of a child of that age, who was still illiterate, were limited. The three seers were also in a state of extreme fatigue, both on the evening of October 13 and during the whole following week, which diminished the usual firmness and precision of their replies. We will return to this point in the context of another difficulty raised by their statements.

APPENDIX II

THE PROMISE OF PEACE ON OCTOBER 13

I. «THE WAR WILL END TODAY»

On the evening of October 13, Father Formigao asked Lucy: «What did Our Lady say?» «She said the war will end today.»⁵⁶⁶

On October 16, to the parish priest of Fatima, Lucy declared again: «She said... the war will end today.»⁵⁶⁷ When Canon Formigao came back on October 19 to interrogate the seers, he did not obtain any new element which could shed light on this thorny question. On the contrary... «Interrogation of Lucy: “On the 13th

of this month, did Our Lady say the war would end? What are the words She used?” “*This is what She said: ‘The war will end today; the soldiers will be home soon.’*” “But the war is going on. The papers announced that there were battles after the 13th. How can that be explained, if Our Lady said that the war would end today?” “I don’t know. I only know that I heard that the war would end on the 13th. I don’t know anything else.”»⁵⁶⁸

And on that day, the responses of Jacinta, which we will quote later on, were not any more satisfying... The interrogation of Father Lacerda, which was also on October 13, carries the same puzzling affirmation: «The war will end today», which Jacinta repeated on November 2.⁵⁶⁹

Such are the facts. According to Canon Martins dos Reis, they raise «what is certainly the most difficult and serious objection in all the problems associated with Fatima.»⁵⁷⁰ How could Our Lady have said, «the war will end today», when the armistice would not be signed until November 11, 1918, thirteen months later?

An historian of Fatima believes he has a plausible explanation...

A SECRET DIPLOMATIC ACCORD IN OCTOBER 1917? Such might indeed be the first, the easiest, and the most satisfying solution, since in this eventuality there would be no error in the testimony of the seers. This is the thesis maintained by Canon S. Martins dos Reis:⁵⁷¹ «It is a well known fact in all wars that their conclusion is tacitly decided and fixed by the chancelleries before it is known officially. The formal cessation of a war always precedes and determines its material cessation. War can continue, even when peace has been declared or decided upon...»

And our author concludes: «Since it has not been shown with certainty that on October 13, 1917, there was no decision or determinant fact in favour of peace in the chancelleries or military high commands... one cannot invoke the material reality of the continuation of the war against the veracity of the seer and the apparition.»⁵⁷²

This explanation would indeed be the simplest... But is it not in fact *too easy*? Not without reason has this argument been turned around against its author: As long as this supposed secret accord has not been discovered, its purely theoretical possibility does not explain the disconcerting declaration of the seers:

«The war will end today.» Moreover, is it not logical to believe that if an agreement of such decisive importance had taken place that day, it would have been known for a long time? More than seventy years have passed since the events, and the author does not supply any concrete decisive fact in favour of his hypothesis.

So the difficulty remains... To clear it up, it is better to leave this hypothesis aside and advance step by step, using more certain data. First of all let us examine the other version of the words of Our Lady, which is quoted by Sister Lucy in her Memoirs.

II. «THE WAR WILL END»

«The war will end and the soldiers will return home soon.» This is the formula retained by Lucy as the most certain; nor can she be accused of inventing it later on to tidy up the affair. It is just as well attested as the other expression: «the war will end today».

Many direct witnesses who interrogated Lucy on the afternoon of the 13th report this version. Thus for example Joaquin dos Reis: «The war will end soon». The baron of Alvaiazere, responding to an inquiry, wrote on December 30, 1917: «Lucy said to me (on October 13) that the war would end soon.» Several versions appearing in the press adopt the same formula: The *Diario de Noticias*, in its article of October 15: «The Lady told them that peace would come soon, and that it would not be long before the soldiers returned.» The *Primeiro de Janeiro*, on October 16: The seer «announced that the end of the war and the return of the soldiers was near, which filled the multitude with joy.»⁵⁷³

As for Lucy, she remembers very well having announced: «The war will end.»⁵⁷⁴ And her testimony is corroborated by that of Dr. Carlos Mendez, who carried her in his arms to the road. He reports her as saying: «Our Lady wants you to do penance. *If you do penance, the war will end!*»⁵⁷⁵ Avelina de Almeida, who was present at this scene, also reports her words in this way in his article in *O Seculo* of October 15: «Lucy, with theatrical gestures (sic), on the shoulders of a man who carries her from group to group, announces that the war will end and our soldiers will return home.»⁵⁷⁶

We have then for this version a whole series of certain testimonies, confirmed by

other affirmations of Our Lady, from previous apparitions, which are exactly identical. We know that in the great secret of July 13, Our Lady had already announced: «The war will end», and on September 13 she had repeated the same prophecy. «The war is to end», says the report of the pastor, Father Ferreira, dated September 15.

THE PROPHECY FULFILLED. This announcement of the approaching end of the war was verified by the events, first for Portugal and then for the other belligerents.

Even if, as in the majority of biblical prophecies, the diverse plans are not clearly distinguished, a whole part of the message of Fatima concerns first of all the “land of Holy Mary”. In 1916 it was first for their own nation that the “Angel of Portugal” had invited the three shepherds to sacrifice themselves: «In this way you will draw down peace on your homeland.» The definite reference of Our Lady to the approaching return of the soldiers («Soon the soldiers will go home») shows that Her words, «the war will end», concerned first of all Portugal and its expeditionary corps.

We will show at length in Volume II that it was effectively in the autumn of 1917, and even precisely in the municipal elections of October 14, that the political turnaround which would determine the future of the nation began. Portugal had been involved in the war since March 9, 1916, and the 40,000 men sent to the French front had begun fighting in the spring of 1917. Yet, after the coup d’Etat of Sidonio Pais on December 8, 1917, the Portuguese participation in the war would be ended earlier than expected. Indeed in April 1918, the new government decided to recall its expeditionary corps and only a contingent of volunteers continued the war on the French front.

More generally speaking, in spite of the entrance of the United States into the conflict, which rendered the final victory of the Allies certain, the bitterness and uncertainty of the battles of 1918 showed that in October 1917, the date of the end of the war remained completely uncertain. A collapse of the French front before one of the terrible German offensives of 1918 could have notably prolonged the duration of the hostilities. This means that even as far as the world war is concerned, the words of Our Lady, «the war shall end soon», retain all their prophetic value. We shall return to this point later on.

III. LUCY'S ERROR

The other words that the seers attributed to Our Lady on the evening of October 13 remain to be explained. Even before looking to determine the precise phrase pronounced by the apparition, we can definitely affirm that Lucy and Jacinta certainly misunderstood Her words in believing that the battles would cease that very day. Sister Lucy herself recognized it quite simply. However, the explanations she gives us are very valuable for understanding the psychological reasons as well as the limits of her error.

DURING THE APPARITION. On May 18, 1941, in a letter to her confessor who had questioned her on this point, Sister Lucy explains: «On the subject of the war, I remember Our Lady expressing Herself in this way: “The war will end and the soldiers will come home soon.”» This is in fact the formula she retains in her Memoirs. «But (she continues) what perhaps prevented me from giving my full attention at that moment was my concern to remember the requests I had been asked to present; at that precise moment I wished to remember them, and that is why I was slightly distracted. Then, anxious to make these requests, I almost interrupted what Our Lady was saying...»⁵⁷⁷

On July 8, 1924, she had already given this response before the commission of inquiry: «Preoccupied by all the requests which had been confided to me to present to Our Lady, I had not given my whole attention to Her words.»⁵⁷⁸ In her Fourth Memoir, in 1941, she writes again: «It was possibly because I was so anxious to remember the innumerable graces that I had to ask of Our Lady *that I was mistaken when I understood that the war would end on that very 13th.*»⁵⁷⁹

OCTOBER 13: THE TERRIBLE TRIAL OF THE INTERROGATIONS. Along with this insufficient attention at the very moment of the apparition, we must also take into account another important psychological factor: the extreme fatigue of the seers on October 13, as well as in following days.

Before the apparition we have already seen how Jacinta, frightened by this great crowd that pressed her from every side, began to cry. Right after the great miracle, the enthusiastic witnesses harried the seers again with innumerable questions. Avelino de Almeida, the editor of *O Seculo*, would write: «One of the little seers, Jacinta, is closer to passing out than dancing.» The crowd of curious people was packed so tightly around the three seers that Lucy was deprived of her braids... without even being able to find the perpetrator of the larceny!⁵⁸⁰

If we remember that all this commotion around them, this haranguing with questions had begun in the morning and had not stopped since then, without leaving them the slightest respite, we can easily understand why they were exhausted with fatigue in the evening. «I spent the afternoon of that day with my cousins», Lucy reports. «We were like some curious creature that the multitudes wanted to see and observe. By night time I was really exhausted with so many questions and interrogations.»⁵⁸¹

RUMOURS OF THE END OF THE WAR. And during this afternoon of October 13, Lucy was probably influenced by the ideas of some overenthusiastic pilgrims who imagined that the miracle of the sun would be accompanied by the immediate end of the war.

In effect, since Our Lady in Her messages had often requested prayers to end the war, many journalists, going beyond the exact sense of Her words, dared to present the cessation of combat on October 13 as a prophecy of the apparition.

Thus for example in *O Mundo* of August 19, José do Vale affirmed that the Vision had promised to return on October 13 to «end the war». A proof that this idea was widely believed among the crowd is that Avelino de Almeida alludes to it in his article in *O Seculo*, published the very morning of October 13: «Some pious people cherish the hope that the Virgin Mary will tell them something about the end of the war, and even, in Her goodness, *go so far as to tell them when a peace treaty will be concluded.*»⁵⁸² Another revealing detail about this state of mind: at the Cova da Iria on October 13, images of the Virgin were being sold with the title: “Our Lady of Peace”.⁵⁸³

There is no question that in the enthusiasm of the great miracle observed by all, the seers were assailed with questions on the precise date of the end of the war. There is an additional proof in a recollection of Sister Lucy which she reports to her confessor in the letter already quoted: «I did not say “the war is over”», she explains. «I said: “the war will end”, and when I was asked: “When? Today?” to free myself from so many questions and without attaching great importance to it, or reflecting at all on what Our Lady had said, I answered, “Yes, today.”»⁵⁸⁴

This gives us a good insight into the psychological causes of Lucy’s error: during the apparition, her attention was distracted by her concern for all the requests to be passed on; and right after, there were continuous questions on the date of the end of the war, suggesting the erroneous response of an immediate

peace. Finally on the evening of October 13, in her extreme fatigue, Lucy was convinced Our Lady had announced that the war would end that very day.

«Even in the evening the interrogations did not let up»,⁵⁸⁵ she writes in her Memoirs. It was around seven o'clock in the evening when Canon Formigao arrived to interrogate the seers. Lucy had to respond to all his questions, and it was then perhaps that she pronounced for the first time the incomplete and therefore unfortunate phrase: «Our Lady said... that the war would end today.» She no longer made any mention either of the condition («they must convert!») or the delay («the war will end.»). The investigator, who understood her response as an affirmation by Our Lady of an immediate and miraculous suspension of the fighting, was troubled by it... Perhaps this was the main reason why he decided to come back on the 19th for new interrogations, hoping no doubt to complete them under better conditions. Alas, this would not be the case!

AFTER THE INTERROGATIONS OF OCTOBER 13-19. In the days following the apparition, Lucy had neither the time nor the necessary liberty of spirit to reflect on and clarify her recollections... «Several persons who had not been able to interrogate me», she writes, «stayed until the following day to wait their turn. Some of them even tried to talk to me that night, but, overcome by weariness, I just dropped down and fell asleep on the floor...

«On the following day, or rather, on the following days, the questioning continued. Almost every day, from then on, people went to the Cova da Iria to implore the protection of Our Lady. Everybody wanted to see the seers, to put questions to them, and to recite the Rosary with them.»⁵⁸⁶

Unfortunately, it was in these exceedingly unfavourable circumstances that the interrogations which have come down to us took place: on October 16, that of the pastor Father Ferreira and on the 19th those of Father Lacerda and Canon Formigao. We must remember this context, and keep it in mind.

On October 17, «a veritable demon in human form, the arsonist of the church of Alcanena, came to interrogate and threaten the children.» When Father Formigao arrived at Aljustrel on October 19, around three in the afternoon, the seers were already in the middle of an interrogation by Father Lacerda, then military chaplain of the expeditionary corps in France, accompanied by the parish priest of Fatima and a priest of Leiria. At the end of his own interrogation which followed immediately after (poor children!), Canon Formigao himself noticed

the extreme physical and moral fatigue of the seers. He learned «that Lucy, on the night of the 18-19th, had not returned to her house to sleep, but had remained in her uncle's house, certainly because she had had to answer insidious and prolonged questions during the night.»

With clear perception, he summed up the situation: «Lucy especially, because she was interrogated the longest, could not be more fatigued, *and her state of exhaustion causes her to respond to the questions put to her without attention and the desirable reflection. She responds sometimes almost mechanically and she comes to the point that often she cannot well recall certain circumstances of the apparitions. This is contrary to what she did before October 13th.*

«Unless somebody is careful to spare the children the fatigue of too frequent and prolonged interrogations, their health runs the risk of being profoundly shaken. In truth, it would be prudent to remove the three shepherds of Aljustrel, and send them somewhere they are not known, if we do not want to see them disappear soon, especially since the parents do not have sufficient authority to prevent any visitor from interrogating them whenever he pleases.»⁵⁸⁷

This excessive fatigue and its consequences – the lack of desirable attention and reflection – do they sufficiently explain the stubbornness of Lucy in believing that Our Lady had announced the immediate end of the war? We may think so. Or was she possibly led into error by the very words of the apparition which she may have remembered, but simply misunderstood?

IV. PEACE ON A CONDITION

Indeed, it is not impossible that the Virgin Mary Herself pronounced the contentious phrase that Lucy and Jacinta attributed to Her so firmly. Yes, She might have said, «The war will end today», but in a context that would have made its precise meaning clear.

This is the solution proposed by one of the best historians of Fatima, Father Messias Dias Coelho, in his masterly work *O que falta para a conversão da Russia*.⁵⁸⁸ The Most Holy Virgin may have said: «*Let men amend their lives and the war will end today.*» With the two prophecies linked to one another in this way, the words of Our Lady would not be a prophecy of a sudden and miraculous end of the hostilities, but a conditional promise to grant peace when

men conform to Her desires.

We could then perfectly understand where Lucy's error lay: she literally reported the words pronounced by Our Lady, but separating the two propositions which were linked: «Let men amend their lives and the war will end today», entirely transforming the character of the second proposition, removing its conditional character.⁵⁸⁹ A twofold series of solid arguments can be advanced in favour of this solution.

THE STATEMENTS OF THE SEERS. Lucy herself, immediately after the apparition, seems to have repeated the words of Our Lady in their conditional form. Doctor Carlos Mendes reports that, while he carried her in his arms towards the road, she shouted: «Do penance! Do penance! Our Lady wants you to do penance! If you do penance, the war will end!»⁵⁹⁰ But very quickly, under the influence of fatigue and incessant questions, Lucy forgot the link between these two propositions and when she was asked about the end of the war, she answered with the only phrase that mentioned war: «the war will end», or «the war will end today».

But we have a proof that Jacinta retained a better recollection of the words of Our Lady and their conditional meaning. In her account of the apparitions written in 1922 Lucy writes: «Then I understood that Our Lady had said to me: “When I go back to Heaven, the war will end today.” But my cousin Jacinta said that this is what She had said: “*If the people amend their lives, the war will end today.*” This is why I cannot affirm how She pronounced these words.»⁵⁹¹ This important text, of which Father Messias Dias Coelho was unaware, confirms his hypothesis.

What is more, we find a trace of this divergence of interpretation between the two seers in the Formigao interrogation of October 19, 1917. The Canon asked Jacinta: «What did Our Lady say this last time?» Jacinta answered: «I come here to tell you not to offend Our Lord any more, for He is already too much offended. *If the people amend their lives, the war will end*; if they do not amend their lives, the world will end.»⁵⁹² Jacinta then had grasped the conditional meaning of the promise.

But the humble girl, who was used to trusting her older cousin, went on: «But Lucy heard what Our Lady said better than I did.» What is important is this: if, in the first three days following the apparition, Lucy and she had not even had

time to consult each other,⁵⁹³ they were surely able to do so before the 19th.

And then, after having given her own recollection, Jacinta repeats word for word the interpretation of Lucy: «“Did She say that the war would end that very day, or that it would end soon?” “Our Lady said that the war would end when She arrived in Heaven.” “But the war has not ended.” “But it will end, it will.”»

Note that these two replies only repeat those of Lucy. And when the Canon insists: «When will it end?» Jacinta, obviously bewildered, answers: «I think it will end on Sunday.»⁵⁹⁴ We must observe however that she does not attribute this childish expression to the apparition. Her replies in which she blindly follows Lucy’s interpretation – whom she thought had surely better understood! – must not make us forget her original testimony, which in this case turned out to be more precise than her cousin’s: *«If the people amend their lives, the war will end.»*

THE GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE MESSAGE. In addition to Jacinta’s testimony we can put forward in favour of the conditional version («Let men amend their lives and the war will end today») another weighty argument which is practically decisive – the consideration of the general context of the message.

Indeed an expression pronounced by the Blessed Virgin on May 13 sheds much light on Her requests of October 13. Already Lucy had asked Her then: «Can You tell me if the war will go on long, or will it end soon?» And Our Lady answered: «I cannot tell you yet, because I have not yet told you *what I want.*»⁵⁹⁵ From the beginning, then, Our Lady had announced that obtaining peace would depend on whether men obeyed Her requests. She had also made clear that only on October 13 would She solemnly express Her desires: «In October, I will tell you who I am and what I want.» Thus it becomes clearer how Her final message corresponds to this twofold announcement.

On October 13, Our Lady of the Rosary in effect solemnly redoubled all Her requests. We have every reason to believe that She proposed them as necessary preliminaries for peace. To the question that was then on everybody’s lips, «When will the war end? Today?» the Blessed Virgin responds: “Men must do «what I want», they must be converted and say the Rosary, and then «the war will end, even today.» Mercifully, the chastisement will not last one day longer than the refusal of men to conform to My requests.” This is undoubtedly the most probable meaning of the words pronounced by Our Lady, at least to the

extent they can be reconstructed using the oldest testimonies of the seers and later declarations of Sister Lucy, as well as in the light of the general context of the message.

FROM THE PROMISE OF OCTOBER 13... TO THE GREAT SECRET. This promise of peace in response to the accomplishment of Her requests is found in the great secret of July 13: «If men do what I tell you... there will be peace.» Far from being banal or utopian because the conditions could not be fulfilled, we will soon see the unprecedented and eschatological character of this offer of peace made to the world. This means that as of this day the divine decision had been declared: God in His mercy would expect nothing more than the fulfilment of the few requests in honour of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to immediately (and miraculously) grant the gift of peace to humanity: «The war will end today» or as Lucy said: «I understood that Our Lady had said: “When I arrive in Heaven, the war will end today.”» «... and a certain period of peace will be granted to the world.» These are the last words of the Secret.

CONCLUSION ON THE ERROR OF THE THREE SEERS. With great probability we can believe that:

1. They forgot the exact order of the words of Our Lady.
2. Lucy did not grasp the link between the promise of peace and the requests for conversion, which in effect were preliminary conditions for peace.⁵⁹⁶
3. Given their extreme fatigue and the questions that suggested to them an erroneous response, on the evening of October 13, Lucy believed in the imminent end of the war.

All these errors can easily be understood when we consider that the children were exhausted with fatigue, and in a sense they even prove the veracity of their witness: their stubbornness in reporting such baffling words clearly shows – yet another proof! – that nobody was dictating the message to them, but, on the contrary they had it from Our Lady and Her alone! Now after having manifested Her power by the prodigious “dance of the sun”, She allowed Her messengers to make this error in the transmission of Her message. For that matter, do we not find analogous difficulties in the Gospel accounts of the resurrection of Our Lord?

As Pascal said regarding the difficulties of the Gospel: «All the most apparent weaknesses are in reality strengths.»⁵⁹⁷

SECTION III: The divine seal, the miracle of October 13

CHAPTER X

«THE DANCE OF THE SUN»

Here are the facts, briefly recounted by a journalist that nobody could suspect of impartiality in this affair, and with reason! The man in question is Avelino de Almeida, Editor in Chief of *O Seculo*, the great “liberal”, anticlerical and Masonic daily of Lisbon:

«From the road, where the cars were packed together, and several hundred people had remained, not having had the courage to advance towards the muddy field, one could see the immense multitude turn towards the sun, which appeared at its zenith, coming out of the clouds.

«It resembles a dull silver disc, and it is possible to fix one’s eyes on it without the least damage to the eye. It does not burn the eyes. It does not blind them. One might say that an eclipse was taking place.

«An immense clamour bursts out, and those who are nearer to the crowd hear a shout: “Miracle! Miracle! Prodigy!... Prodigy!...”

«The attitude of the people takes us back to biblical times. Stupefied and with heads uncovered, they watch the blue sky. Before their dazzled eyes the sun trembled, the sun made unusual and brusque movements, defying all the laws of the cosmos, and according to the typical expression of the peasants, “the sun danced”...»⁵⁹⁸

Violently challenged by all the anticlerical press, Avelino de Almeida renewed his testimony fifteen days later in his review, *Ilustração Portuguesa*. This time, he illustrated his account with a dozen photographs of the immense crowd, in a state of ecstasy, and all through his article he repeated like a refrain: «I saw it... I saw it... I saw it.»

Let us quote his conclusion:

«What did I see at Fatima that was even stranger? The rain, at an hour announced in advance, ceased falling; the thick mass of clouds dissolved; and the sun – a dull silver disc – came into view at its zenith, and began to

dance in a violent and convulsive movement, which a great number of witnesses compared to a serpentine dance, because the colours taken on by the surface of the sun were so beautiful and gleaming.»

And our reporter concludes, quite appropriately:

«Miracle, as the people shouted? A natural phenomenon, as the learned would say? For the moment, I do not trouble myself with finding out, but only with affirming *what I saw*... The rest is a matter between Science and the Church.»

FIRST HISTORY, THEN SCIENCE, FINALLY FAITH

This conclusion of the agnostic and positivist journalist we can make our own. It is not a question of saying, «I believe in it!» or «I don't believe in it!» The fact does not belong first to the domain of faith, or even that of science. *Before all else it is a historical event*, which must be related with the greatest precision, even to its tiniest details. Then, and only then, science or more exactly the rational sciences can consider the facts and judge their natural or supernatural character. And finally, after the results of the scientific examination, the Church must make a pronouncement...

This order in the analysis of the fact by which one passes successively from history to science, and only then to theology and faith, cannot be dispensed with by anybody without confusing the whole process. And this confusion, which is so common, easily leads us to adopt a conclusion which corresponds neither to reality or the facts, nor their rational interpretation, but only to subjective *a priori* passions and prejudices.

I. THE HISTORY: A PRODIGIOUS, EXTRAORDINARY EVENT

It is easy to relate what happened at the Cova da Iria on October 13: The witnesses of the event were innumerable, their testimonies agree, and the documents they left us are superabundant. Is a brief summary needed?

THE HISTORICAL SOURCES

THE CONTEMPORARY PORTUGUESE PRESS. First of all there are the numerous accounts which appeared immediately in the Portuguese press. It is noteworthy that the first publications to bear witness to it were the anticlerical papers. The three articles of Avelina de Almeida, that of October 13, written right after the event, that of the 15th, written the same night at Vila Nova de Ourem, and that of October 29 merit special mention. In spite of the derisive tone and Voltairian irony which in part inspire the first article, in spite of the anticlerical prejudices which still appear in the article of the 15th, these texts of a talented journalist, who was also honest and conscientious, are incomparable historical documents.⁵⁹⁹ But he was not the only one to relate the facts, and all through our exposition we will cite the testimony of other journalists present at the Cova da Iria.

THE OFFICIAL INVESTIGATIONS. In November of 1917, at the request of Msgr. Vidal, who was then directing the diocese of Lisbon, the parish priest of Fatima began his inquiry and interrogated several witnesses from the parish. Unfortunately, he wrote down only four depositions... And why? The other depositions, he explains ingenuously, «were not written down because they add nothing to the preceding ones.» Granted, it is tiring to write down texts which all say the same thing! But what a pity from the historian's point of view! The canonical investigation did complete the documentation, but without assembling the mounds of evidence it was then possible to collect. We will return to this point in Volume II.

THE INVESTIGATIONS OF HISTORIANS. Fortunately, there were more zealous investigators to make up for these negligences. All the first historians of Fatima went to interrogate the witnesses. Father Formigao obtained from Dr. Almeida Garrett, professor of the Faculty of Sciences at Coimbra, the most scientific and detailed account we have of the events. Father da Fonseca went to verify the points disputed by Father Dhanis,⁶⁰⁰ then Father de Marchi, Canon Barthas, Father Messias Dias Coelho, Father Richard, and in 1960 John Haffert, who collected the statements of forty witnesses in a book, *Meet the Witnesses*.⁶⁰¹ In 1967, Father Martins dos Reis devoted a whole new book to the solar phenomenon of October 13.⁶⁰²

All these successive inquiries conducted by the historians of Fatima resulted in the collation of an impressive number of accounts of the event, which were published during the lifetime of numerous witnesses. Thus they were completely at liberty to publish any corrections, where they were necessary.

In 1977, to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the last apparition, it was still possible to reunite at Fatima more than thirty persons who had attended the solar prodigy, and who were able to give their testimony once again.⁶⁰³

REPORTING ON THE EVENTS OF OCTOBER 13. Rather than cite only a few documents at length – it is to be hoped that soon almost all of them will be collected in the great critical work of Father Alonso – we prefer, using extracts from numerous accounts of the witnesses, to reconstruct a precise report which will permit us, hour by hour and minute by minute, to relive this decisive day, which is certainly one of the most important of this century.⁶⁰⁴

WAITING FOR THE EVENT

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12: THE PILGRIMS ON THE MARCH. To begin with, let us follow the report of Avelino de Almeida, which is particularly vivid and colourful. Having arrived at the train station of Chao de Macas, the director of *O Seculo* had the annoying surprise of not finding the car which was to take him to Vila Nova de Ourem, where he would spend the night. «The stagecoach has no more room, and all the carts which await the passengers have long been booked.» So courageously, he set out on foot.

«... On the road (from Chao de Macas to Vila Nova de Ourem), we encounter the first groups which are on their way to the holy place, a good thirteen miles away.

«Men and women are for the most part barefoot, the latter carrying their shoes in bags on their heads, while the men lean on thin sticks and are also prudently armed with umbrellas. Apparently indifferent to what is going on around them, they do not seem to notice the countryside nor their fellow-travellers, but murmur the Rosary as they go along immersed in thought.

«A woman recites the first part of the Ave Maria and immediately her companions continue the second part in chorus. They move rhythmically and rapidly in order to reach the place of the apparitions by nightfall. Here, under the stars they will sleep, keeping the first and best places near the little tree.»

«... It is only thanks to an extreme favour that we are able to obtain lodgings

in Ourem. During the night the most varied types of vehicle have arrived in the square, bringing their loads of the devout and the curious...»⁶⁰⁵

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13: A PILGRIMAGE OF PENANCE. The whole night it rained. But as the proverb says, «the morning rain does not stop the pilgrim». «The sudden change in the weather, which allowed the stubborn rain to transform the dusty roads into muddy quagmires, for one day made the gentle autumn give way to the bitterest winter weather. This did not move the crowd, or cause it to give up or lose hope.»⁶⁰⁶

«At daybreak fresh groups hurry through the town and the habitual quiet is broken by singing of the most varied kind... At sunrise the weather looks threatening. Black clouds gather right over Fatima but this does not deter the people who by now are flocking in from all sides, employing every means of transport. There are luxurious motor cars travelling at speed, oxcarts pulled in to the side of the road, victorias, closed carriages, carts in which seats are improvised and in which not another soul could be squeezed. Everyone is provided with food both for themselves and for the beasts... valiantly playing their part.

«Here and there one sees a cart decorated with greenery, and although there is an air of discreet festivity people are sober and well-mannered. Donkeys bray at the side of the road and the innumerable cyclists make prodigious efforts not to collide with the carts.

«By ten o'clock the sky was completely hidden behind the clouds and the rain began to fall in earnest. Swept by the strong wind and beating upon the faces of the people, it soaked the macadam and the pilgrims, often without protection against the weather, to the marrow of their bones. But no one complained or turned back, and if some took shelter under trees or walls, the great majority continued on their journey with remarkable indifference to the rain.

AT THE COVA DA IRIA: HOURS OF WAITING... IN THE RAIN. «The place where the Blessed Virgin is alleged to have appeared is fronted to a large extent by the road which leads to Leiria, along which the vehicles that bring the pilgrims are parked. But the great mass of the people congregate round the oak tree which, according to the children, is Our Lady's pedestal. It can be imagined as the centre of a large circle round which the spectators

gather to watch events.

«Seen from the road the general effect is picturesque. The peasants, sheltering under their huge umbrellas, accompany the unloading of fodder with the singing of hymns and the recitation of decades of the Rosary in a matter-of-fact way. People plod through the sticky clay in order to see the famous oak tree with its wooden arch and hanging lanterns, at closer quarters...

«Groups take it in turns to sing the praises of the Virgin, while a terrified hare runs through the crowd and is hardly noticed except by a half a dozen or so of small boys, who catch and beat it to death with sticks...» (*O Seculo*, October 15; De Marchi, p. 130-131).

BETWEEN 50,000 AND 70,000 WITNESSES

How many people were there at the Cova da Iria? It is difficult and even impossible to get the exact number. The exact figure does not matter much, for it changes absolutely nothing – neither the reality of the fact, nor the explanation we can give of it. It is only a question of approaching the historical reality as closely as possible.

For this purpose, all we can do is compare the different estimates, trying to discern each one's degree of credibility. G. de Sede claims that it is the “incense-bearers” of Fatima who inflate the number of witnesses each year.⁶⁰⁷ Nothing could be more false. For the largest estimate, that of Dr. Almeida Garrett, was proposed a few months after the event. He estimates the spectators at over 100,000. In his article published in *O Seculo* of October 15, Avelino de Almeida wrote: «This crowd, which unbiased estimates of learned persons, very foreign to mystical influences (sic), place at somewhere between thirty to forty thousand people.»⁶⁰⁸ Fifteen days later, he corrected his first estimate: «On October 13, according to the calculations of completely unbiased people, some fifty thousand people were gathered at the moor of Fatima.»⁶⁰⁹ A neutral journal, the *Primeiro de Janeiro*, also estimated the crowd at fifty thousand people. Thus one can say, with near certitude, that this is a minimum figure; this is why the majority of historians propose that there were probably 70,000 witnesses in the crowd.

A DIVERSIFIED CROWD. Although «the peasants dominated» the crowd, as

Avelino de Almeida noted, the whole population of Portugal was represented at the Cova da Iria. Was such a representative and motley crowd ever seen? People of all sorts, from all regions of the country, from all social classes and cultural levels, the faithful already certain of witnessing a miracle and the fanatical and sceptical unbelievers, all were side by side, waiting for what would take place, and preparing to observe it as best they could.

«At the moment of the great miracle», notes a Portuguese historian, Leopoldo Nunes, «there were present some of the most illustrious men of letters, in the arts and the sciences, and almost all were unbelievers coming out of simple curiosity, led by the prediction of the seers.»⁶¹⁰ After the account of the event, we will report the reactions of some of them. Even the national Minister of Education for the masonic government was there! We will analyse his version of events.

Although the great mass of people was composed of the faithful, there were many of the curious and the incredulous. They had come to see, to amuse themselves, and make fun of the credulity of the others!⁶¹¹

Finally let us point out that a good number of believers, who were practicing Catholics, were in no way disposed to believe in the apparitions. Among them there were also many who had remained on the road to Leiria, observing the spectacle from afar, well sheltered by their cars, such as Dr. Almeida Garrett, Professor Ferreira Borges or the lawyer Pinto Coelho, to whom we shall return...



OCTOBER 13, 1917. BEFORE THE APPARITION. As seen from above the Cova da Iria during the morning.

«I arrived at noon. The rain which had been falling since the morning, fine and persistent, propelled by a fierce wind, continued to fall...» (Dr. Almeida Garret).

THE HOUR APPROACHES...

«The presence of the seers (writes Avelino de Almeida) is announced perhaps a half hour before the moment indicated for the apparition.⁶¹² The little girls, crowned with flowers, are led to the place where the platform has been erected. The rain continues without stopping, but nobody loses hope. Some late-coming wagons arrive on the road. Groups of the faithful kneel in the mud and Lucy asks them, orders them, to shut their umbrellas. The order is transmitted and executed right away, without resistance.»⁶¹³

AT NOON, SOLAR TIME... According to the watches it is already almost 1:30 p.m.⁶¹⁴ Near the seers, a priest who has spent the whole night there begins to get impatient:

«He asks them what time Our Lady is to appear, recounts Maria Carreira. “At midday”, said Lucy. The priest looked at his watch and said: “Look, it’s midday now! Our Lady doesn’t lie!.. Well! Well!...” After a few minutes he

said again: “It’s past midday. You see, it’s all a delusion! Run along, all of you!...”

«But Lucy refused to go and the priest began to push the three children with his hands. Lucy who was nearly crying, said to him: “If anyone wants to go, they can go. I shall stay where I am. Our Lady said She would come. She came the other times and She will come this time, too!”

«At the same time she looked to the east and said to Jacinta: “Jacinta, kneel down; Our Lady is coming. I saw the lightning!”

«The priest didn’t say another word and I never saw him again!»⁶¹⁵

THE SERIES OF MARVELLOUS PHENOMENA

In comparing the numerous accounts of the witnesses, we can distinguish fairly well the various aspects and order of the stupefying phenomena observed by all.⁶¹⁶ For this analysis, which attempts to reconstruct the picture of the events in their various phases, we generally follow the account of Dr. Almeida Garrett, professor of the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Coimbra. This account is the work of a learned person used to making subtle and precise observations, which he expresses with perfect clarity.⁶¹⁷

I. AT THE MOMENT OF THE APPARITION: A COLUMN OF CLOUD

Here is the first marvellous fact observed by Dr. Almeida Garrett: «It must have been about one-thirty by the legal time and about midday by the sun, when on the very spot where the children were, a fine, slender, bluish column of smoke rose straight up to about six feet above their heads, and vanished at this height. This phenomenon, which was perfectly visible to the naked eye, lasted a few seconds. Not having kept track of the time, I could not say whether it was less than a minute or longer. The smoke suddenly disappeared, and a few moments later the phenomenon took place a second and then a third time. All three times, and especially the last one, the beams went up and clearly disappeared in the grey atmosphere.

«I looked in that direction with my glasses. I was not able to see anything except

the columns of smoke, but I remained convinced that they were produced by some censer, with incense inside it being swung. Then some people worthy of faith told me that this phenomenon was a regular occurrence on the 13th of the five previous months, and that nobody had made any fire, either this time or the others.»⁶¹⁸

The professor said at the beginning of his account that he was only a little more than a hundred yards from the holm oak. Thus he was well placed to observe everything with precision.

II. THE SUDDEN STOPPING OF THE RAIN

Although there had been a steady rain all morning, during the apparition the rain totally stopped, and suddenly the sky cleared.

«The sky, which had been overcast all day, suddenly clears up; the rain stops and it looks like the sun is about to fill with light the countryside that the wintry morning had made so gloomy...»⁶¹⁹

This sudden change in the weather surprised all the witnesses: «It was a rainy day, with a thin but steady rainfall. But a few minutes before the miracle, it stopped raining.»⁶²⁰ «The rain suddenly stopped.» (Dr. Pereira Gens) «At this moment, I got out of the car, and as I extended my hand to my wife to help her step out, suddenly all the clouds disappeared without the slightest breeze, and the sun was shining in a clear sky.» (Professor Ferreira Borges).⁶²¹

The crowd is waiting expectantly. The believers think the promised miracle is about to happen:

«The miraculous demonstration, the visible sign that had been announced is about to take place, many of the pilgrims said.»⁶²² Meanwhile the chilly spectators were getting impatient: «... I was looking at the spot of the apparitions», writes Dr. Almeida Garrett, «in a serene, if cold, expectation of something happening and with diminishing curiosity because a long time had passed without anything to excite my attention...

«The sun, a few moments before, had broken through the thick layer of clouds which hid it and shone clearly and intensely.»⁶²³

III. THE VISION OF THE SUN

«Suddenly I heard a shout from thousands of voices and saw the multitude which straggled out at my feet, here and there concentrated in small groups round the trees, suddenly turn its back and shoulders away from the point towards which up to now it had directed its attention, and turn to look at the sky on the opposite side.

«Then they saw a unique spectacle», remarks the reporter from *O Seculo*, «an unbelievable spectacle for anyone who did not witness it. From the road... one could see the immense multitude turn towards the sun, which appeared *free from clouds* and in its zenith.

«It resembles a dull silver disc, and it is possible to look at it without the least discomfort. It might have been an eclipse which was taking place.»⁶²⁴

Dr. Almeida Garrett, who observed things more keenly, sought to express with minute precision what his eyes saw:

«I veered to the magnet which seemed to be drawing all eyes and saw it as a disc with a clean-cut rim, luminous and shining, but which did not hurt the eyes.

«I do not agree with the comparison which I have heard made in Fatima – that of a dull silver disc. It was a clearer, richer, brighter colour, having something of the lustre of a pearl.

«It did not in the least resemble the moon on a clear night because one saw it and felt it to be a living body. It was not spherical like the moon. It looked like a glazed wheel made of mother-of-pearl...

«It could not be confused, either, with the sun seen through fog (for there was no fog at the time), because it was not opaque, diffused or veiled. In Fatima it gave light and heat and appeared clear-cut with a well-defined rim.

«The sky was mottled with light cirrus clouds with the blue coming through here and there but sometimes the sun stood out in patches of clear sky. The

clouds passed from west to east and did not obscure the light of the sun, giving the impression of passing behind it, though sometimes these flecks of white took on tones of pink or diaphanous blue as they passed before the sun.

«It was a remarkable fact that one could fix one's eyes on this brazier of light and heat without any pain in the eyes or blinding of the retina.

«The phenomenon, except for two interruptions when the sun seemed to send out rays of refulgent heat which obliged us to look away, must have lasted about ten minutes.»⁶²⁵

Ti Marto, who left us a brief account of the event, which is particularly remarkable for the precision of his observations, also declared: «What was the most extraordinary was that the sun did not hurt our eyes at all.»⁶²⁶



OCTOBER 13, 1917. THE GREAT MIRACLE. Some pilgrims during the dance of the sun.

«Thousands of God's creatures fell on their knees on the sodden ground... Everybody wept, everybody prayed, the men holding their hats in their hands, under the spectacular impression of the awaited miracle! These seconds, these instants, seemed like hours, so intensely were they lived!» (O Dia, October 19, 1917).

IV. THE THREEFOLD DANCE OF THE SUN

Suddenly the sun began trembling, shaking with sudden movements, finally turning over upon itself with dizzying quickness, spraying out rays of light of all the colours of the rainbow. Let the witnesses speak:

*«The sun trembled, the sun made sudden incredible movements outside all cosmic laws – the sun “danced” according to the typical expression of the people.»*⁶²⁷

«It shook and trembled; it seemed like a wheel of fire.» (Maria da Capelinha). This expression is found in many accounts.

*«... It spun like a firewheel, taking on all the colours of the rainbow.»*⁶²⁸ It

looked «like a ball of snow, revolving upon itself.» (Father Lourenço). «The sun's disc did not remain immobile. This was not the sparkling of a heavenly body, for it spun round upon itself in a mad whirl.» (Dr. Almeida Garrett).

«Suddenly», wrote Father Pereira da Silva in a letter sent the very evening of October 13, «the sun appeared with its circumference well-defined. It came down as if to the height of the clouds and began to whirl giddily upon itself like a captive ball of fire. With some interruptions, this lasted about eight minutes.»⁶²⁹

Many witnesses mention these interruptions. Ti Marto relates with precision:

«At a certain moment the sun seemed to stop and then began to move and dance.»⁶³⁰ «However, the sun stops, only to begin its strange dance all over again after a brief interruption, whirling upon itself, giving the impression of approaching or receding.» (Dr. Pereira Gens of Batalha. At the time he was a student at Coimbra.)⁶³¹

Thus the “dance of the sun” that thousands of witnesses affirmed they saw, was actually repeated three times.

V. «ALL THE COLOURS OF THE RAINBOW»

First let us listen to the description of Dr. Almeida Garrett:

«During the solar phenomenon, which I have just described in detail, there were changes of colour in the atmosphere. Looking at the sun, I noticed that everything was becoming darkened. I looked first at the nearest objects and then extended my glance further afield as far as the horizon. I saw everything an amethyst colour. Objects around me, the sky and the atmosphere, were of the same colour. An oak tree nearby threw a shadow of this colour on the ground. Soon I heard a peasant who was near me shout out in tones of stupefaction: “Look, that lady is all yellow!” And in fact everything both near and far had changed, taking on the colour of old yellow damask. People looked as if they were suffering from jaundice and I recall a sensation of amusement at seeing them look so ugly and unattractive. My own hand was the same colour.»⁶³²

«The sun produced different colours: yellow, blue, white...», reports Maria da Capelinha.⁶³³ Maria do Carmo recalls: «The sun took on all the colours of the rainbow. Everything took on the same colours: our faces, our clothes, the earth itself.»⁶³⁴ «A light whose colour varies from one moment to the next is reflected on persons and things», notes Dr. Pereira Gens. Ti Marto: The sun «shot rays in different directions and painted everything in different colours.»⁶³⁵

A witness from Alburitel, Father Inacio Lourenço, points out that objects took on different colours depending on their location: «Objects around us turned all the colours of the rainbow. We saw ourselves blue, yellow, red...»⁶³⁶

VI. THE FALLING OF THE SUN: «THE SUN SEEMED TO FALL TO THE GROUND»

«Then, suddenly», relates Almeida Garrett, «one heard a clamour, a cry of anguish breaking from all the people. The sun, whirling wildly, seemed to loosen itself from the firmament and advance threateningly upon the earth as if to crush us with its huge and fiery weight. The sensation during those moments was terrible.»⁶³⁷

«The sun... began to move and dance until it seemed that it was being detached from the sky and was falling on us. It was a terrible moment!» (Ti Marto).⁶³⁸ «It seemed like a wheel of fire which was going to fall on the people.» (Maria da Capelinha). Alfredo da Silva Santos: «The sun began to move and at a certain moment appeared to be detached from the sky and about to hurtle upon us like a wheel of flame.»⁶³⁹ «It suddenly seemed to come down in a zigzag, menacing the earth», recalls Father Lourenço.⁶⁴⁰

Seeing this unanimity, it is easy to see why Father da Fonseca had no great difficulty refuting the minimizing allegations of Father Dhanis. Among others, he cites the very interesting witness of Baron de Alvaiazere,⁶⁴¹ whom Canon Barthas in turn went to interrogate:

«The sun at its zenith whirled upon itself; it detached itself in descending towards the right, all the while whirling with sudden movements never seen before, to the right and the left; having almost arrived at the horizon line, it went back up to the zenith on the left, tracing a sort of winding ellipse as it

went.»⁶⁴²

The spectators had the irresistible impression that the sun was going to fall on them: «It threatens to fall on us» (Dr. Pereira Gens); «Seeing the sun falling on us...» (Father John Gomes Menitra); «... giving us the impression that it was about to fall on us» (Mario Godinho).⁶⁴³ It was such a terrible moment that several people fainted.

«Finally, the sun stopped and everybody breathed a sigh of relief...» recalls Maria da Capelinha.⁶⁴⁴

VII. «EVERYBODY'S CLOTHES WERE DRY»

A last astonishing fact: all these people, who were for the most part soaked to the bone, noticed with joy and stupefaction that they were dry. The fact is attested in the canonical process, and the academician Marques da Cruz made a personal inquiry on the subject. He writes:

«This enormous multitude was drenched, for it had rained unceasingly since dawn. But – though this may appear incredible – after the great miracle everyone felt comfortable, and found his garments quite dry, a subject of general wonder... The truth of this fact has been guaranteed with the greatest sincerity by dozens and dozens of persons of absolute trustworthiness, whom I have known intimately from childhood, and who are still alive (1937), as well as by persons from various districts of the country who were present.»⁶⁴⁵

Sister Lucy herself, who was absorbed in her ecstasy, was not aware of any of this, and did not even think of pointing out this fact. She declared to Canon Barthas: «However, some nuns of my congregation, who were still in the world and were at Fatima that day, assured me of the reality of the phenomenon.»⁶⁴⁶

How can we explain this fact? The account of Dr. Pereira Gens gives us a glimpse into the answer:

«... It continues to rain so strongly that in spite of our umbrellas, nobody has a stitch of dry clothing left... The rain suddenly stops, the clouds split open, and the sun is visible in all its splendour. Our clothes are wet and our

bodies cold; I still remember the delicious sensation that this warm caress of the sun gave me...» And after mentioning the dance of the sun, he continues: «Although it is true that the luminosity of the sun was diminished, *its warmth lost none of its power*. I feel my clothes almost dry now, although they were all wet only a few moments ago.»⁶⁴⁷

In *A Ordem*, Pinto Coelho made an analogous remark: «The sun seemed... to be loosened from the sky and to be approaching the earth, strongly radiating heat.»⁶⁴⁸ «We felt the heat as though we had entered an overheated steam-room», remarked Maria de Vieira Campos.⁶⁴⁹

VIII. THE VISION OF THE SOLAR PRODIGY AT A DISTANCE

A marvellous fact is that the phenomenon could be admired as far as two or three miles from Fatima. There are even perfectly credible witnesses who were much further away from the Cova da Iria, who related how they had seen the unheard of spectacle of the dance of the sun, exactly as did the thousands of pilgrims gathered around the holm oak of the apparition.

AT SAO PEDRO DE MUEL. At a distance of about twenty-five miles from Fatima, while he was on the veranda of his summer home next to the ocean, at Sao Pedro de Muel, the poet Alfonso Lopes Vieira was suddenly surprised by a most unusual spectacle:

«On that day, October 13, 1917, without remembering the predictions of the children, I was enchanted by a remarkable spectacle in the sky of a kind I had never seen before. I saw it from this veranda.»

All his relatives witnessed it with him.⁶⁵⁰

THE VILLAGE OF ALBURITEL. In the village of Alburitel, the whole population enjoyed the vision of the solar prodigy. The testimony most often cited is that of Father Inacio Lourenço, because it is the most detailed. But all the good villagers, when questioned by the historians, confirmed that they saw the same things he saw, and in exactly the same manner.

«I was only nine years old at this time, and I went to the local village school (about 12 miles from Fatima)...

«At about midday we were surprised by the shouts and cries of some men and women who were passing in the street in front of the school. The teacher, a good, pious woman, though nervous and impressionable, was the first to run into the road, with the children after her. Outside, the people were shouting and weeping and pointing to the sun, ignoring the questions of the schoolmistress.

«It was the great miracle, which one could see quite distinctly from the top of the hill where my village was situated...

«I feel incapable of describing what I saw and felt. I looked fixedly at the sun, which seemed pale and did not hurt the eyes. Looking like a ball of snow revolving upon itself, it suddenly seemed to come down in a zigzag, menacing the earth. Terrified, I ran and hid myself among the people, who were weeping and expecting the end of the world at any moment.

«During those long moments of the solar prodigy, objects around us turned all the colours of the rainbow...»⁶⁵¹

When interrogated by successive investigators, numerous other witnesses gave a similar version: the teacher herself, Delfina Pereira Lopes, her daughter Myriam, who became Sister Maria do Carmo, Father Joaquim Lourenço (the brother of Father Inacio), etc. Even more so than for the Cova da Iria, it was a simple matter for any historian to take down their witness on the spot, and verify with precision the accounts which had been published.

UNQUESTIONABLE HISTORICAL FACTS

These are the facts, which were seen and felt by over fifty thousand witnesses, all of whom watched the same spectacle. To a rationalist friend, profoundly troubled by the stupefying phenomena he had observed at the Cova da Iria and trying to find out what his innermost convictions were, Avelino de Almeida replied frankly: «Assuredly, our eyes and our ears could not have seen and heard different things.»⁶⁵²

It is important to stress that, regardless of what interpretation is put on it, the solar prodigy of Fatima is an unquestionable fact, a solidly established historical event. It is more solidly established than the mass of facts firmly maintained by

history, that it would never occur to anybody to suspect. For it must be said that the historical events equally well attested by such a host of witnesses are exceedingly rare!

What remains now is to try to propose an adequate explanation for these phenomena, the like of which have never been found in all the annals of history. But this belongs to another order and other disciplines. Once history has established the reality of the facts, it is for science to propose solutions.

«All the phenomena which I have described (writes Dr. Almeida Garrett), were observed by me in a calm and serene state of mind and without any emotional disturbance. *It is for others to interpret and explain them.* Finally, I must declare that never, either before or after October 13, have I observed similar atmospheric or solar phenomena.»⁶⁵³ Avelino de Almeida notes for his part, after pointing out the unanimity of the witnesses: «It is no less certain that rare are those who remain insensible *to the greatness of such a spectacle, which is certainly unique, and in every respect worthy of meditation and study...*»⁶⁵⁴

II. SCIENCE: AN UNQUESTIONABLE MIRACLE

Since it is a question of cosmic or atmospheric phenomena, would the natural sciences have some explanations to propose? Can the disturbing events observed at the Cova da Iria be explained by the ordinary laws of astronomy or meteorology?

I. THE NATURAL SCIENCES: AN EXTRAORDINARY PHENOMENON

THE OPINION OF AN ASTRONOMER. «What should we think of the cosmic phenomena that thousands of people say they saw at Fatima?» Such is the question the paper *O Seculo* posed for the director of the Observatory of Lisbon, Mr. Frederick Oom.

«The illustrious astronomer had the kindness to give us the following response», we read in *O Seculo* on October 18: «“Had it been a cosmic phenomenon, the observatories would not have failed to register it. And this is precisely what is lacking, this inevitable notation of all disturbance in the

solar system, however small. Since then...”⁶⁵⁵

Let us save for later the end of our quotation, which no longer falls within the scope of a competent opinion of a scientist. Moreover, there was hardly any need to consult the Faculty to realize that the sun had not really budged, and that nothing had been disturbed in its regular movement of rotation and revolution! If it had really approached the earth, as thousands of spectators had the terrifying impression it did, it would have been the end of the world and our planet would have disappeared instantly in the great conflagration announced by St. Peter for the day of the final Parousia: «In that day, the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.» (2 Pet. 3:10)

In this sense, the verdict of the astronomer is incontestable: the solar prodigy of Fatima does not belong to his discipline.

A METEOROLOGICAL EXPLANATION. Was it then a simple atmospheric phenomenon, in conformity with the natural interplay of meteorological laws? No again! For never has any phenomenon been observed even remotely comparable to what happened at the Cova da Iria.

How can it be maintained that this «thin, subtle and bluish column of smoke», which went up three times in a row in front of the holm oak before completely disappearing, was a simple natural phenomenon? As for any hypothesis based on fraud, it is practically untenable, given the attentive presence of a crowd of witnesses, many of whom had been present on the spot of the apparitions since the night before.

And then especially, how could we reduce to ordinary phenomena the simple fact that the crowd could stare at the sun for ten minutes without any protection while the sun itself, according to the unanimous word of the witnesses, appeared in a perfectly clear sky, where the clouds had disappeared and there was no fog? The photographs are the proof of it: we find hardly anybody protecting their eyes with their hands. They look at the sun, in an ecstasy.

And finally, how can we explain by the laws of meteorology the incredible spectacle of the threefold dance of the sun in broad daylight, projecting streams of light of all the colours of the rainbow on everything, then whirling upon itself like a wheel of fire before descending in a zigzag towards the earth, threatening

to crush it with its fiery mass? Has any plausible natural explanation been proposed for this unheard of spectacle? No, not ever. At least, not one that explains all the facts. For it is easy to explain a fact by totally distorting it, reconstructing events at will, without taking reality into account.

The conclusion can be stated in a single sentence. And to contest it rationally, one would have to be able to contribute facts, arguments and solid hypotheses to the dossier: The solar prodigy of Fatima cannot be explained by the simple interplay of natural forces, and the laws regulating their natural course are ill-suited to account for it.

Does this mean that the natural sciences cannot study this event and that the phenomenon necessarily and entirely eludes their grasp? This is not certain. And at the end of our investigation we will see how important a role remains for them in any event. But we must not get ahead of ourselves...

II. PSYCHOLOGY: AN OBJECTIVE PHENOMENON

Let us go on with the “scientific” article from *O Seculo*. Our astronomer, observing that the solar phenomenon of Fatima was «completely foreign to the branch of science he practiced», could not content himself with stopping at this completely negative response: «So», the journalist replied, «was it a phenomenon of a psychological nature?» The astronomer answered, «Why not? No doubt it was the effect of a collective suggestion.»⁶⁵⁶

A PERSISTENT MYTH: “COLLECTIVE HALLUCINATION”. From October 13, 1917 until our own day, “collective hallucination” has been the only solution continually repeated by intellectuals of all persuasions, atheists, agnostics, liberals or modernists. This allows them to reassure themselves, giving the phenomena of Fatima only a distracted or contemptuous attention. The cause has been judged, it is obviously some sort of “collective hallucination”! Hey presto!

From André Lorulot to Gerard de Sede, not to mention Father Jacquemet, the learned editor of , the encyclopaedia *Catholicism* – and we could prolong the list almost indefinitely – they are all on the same wavelength, maintaining the same thesis imperturbably expressed by Henri Fesquet: «Undoubtedly it is some sort of optical illusion, resulting from the psychology of a crowd expecting a miracle.»⁶⁵⁷

The impressive unanimity in favour of this one hypothesis leads us to seriously pose the question: what is this “collective hallucination” that everybody speaks about... and nobody ever defines?

WHAT IS A “COLLECTIVE HALLUCINATION”? It is very difficult to get a good idea of what is meant by “collective hallucination”, because the psychology manuals are remarkably quiet on this point. A psychiatrist friend writes to us: «No manual of psychology treats this question in a serious manner.» As a matter of fact, in the monumental treatise on hallucinations by the great specialist, Henry Ey (1543 pages!),⁶⁵⁸ not a single chapter deals with this question.

On the contrary, the «four directing ideas» which are developed in the course of the work show that the notion of “collective hallucination”, as it is commonly employed (and notably to furnish a natural explanation of the phenomena of Fatima), does not correspond to any genuine scientific fact.

To have a hallucination is «to take as objectively true something which does not exist as an object».⁶⁵⁹ In other words, it is to believe in the objective existence of purely imaginary beings. The author demonstrates that this disorder does not happen to just anybody, anywhere. Four «directing ideas» are the framework of his thesis:

1. The hallucination cannot be the effect merely «of a neuro-sensorial excitation».
2. «The hallucinatory apparition is not and cannot be merely the projection of an emotion, albeit unconscious... It requires another dimension, that of a defect or breach in the system of reality.»
3. «The hallucination can only appear where there is a “psychic disorganization”, or “disorganization of the psycho-sensorial systems”.»
4. In short, «hallucination is a pathological phenomenon».⁶⁶⁰
«Hallucination is always the effect either of troubles in the perceptive functions, or of the destruction of the conscious being.»⁶⁶¹

The conclusion is that the hallucinator is always a sick person.

If the solar prodigy of Fatima were to be explained by hallucination, it would amount to saying that the fifty or sixty thousand witnesses were all, without exception, mentally ill!

But, it will be said, here the “mental contagion” intervenes, by which only one hallucinator can transmit his error to a whole crowd... This is a new and completely gratuitous affirmation, without any scientific foundation. Apart from the case of drug addicts who together absorb the same hallucinogenic drugs, the common notion of “collective hallucination” does not correspond to any experimental reality.

Those who use this notion to rid themselves of the disturbing problem posed by Fatima are incapable of citing a single authentic example where such a “collective hallucination” took place, even for a few dozen persons. And yet since Gustave Le Bon, who was the first to propound this nonsense (in 1896!), this thesis continues to be used shamelessly as if, since then, all the solid acquisitions of science had not shown the inanity of his thesis.⁶⁶² Why such stubbornness in treating such a hoary myth so respectfully? Because it is the one thing that the rationalist in difficulty can always trot out... It is his final recourse, a real anti-miracle panacea!

THE SOLAR PRODIGY: “AN ILLUSORY COLLECTIVE VISION”. Such is the solution proposed by Gerard de Sede in 1977. Here are his exact words:

«We are familiar enough with the kind of subjective logic obeyed by what we can call the psychology of the witness: first one wishes he had seen, then one believes he has seen, and finally one says that he has seen. In this way, not having witnessed the promised apparition of the Holy Family, many people affirmed in compensation that they saw the sun change its colour and dance, in defiance of the inflexible laws of celestial motion.»⁶⁶³

And that is all! In this alone consists the rationalist explanation of the solar phenomenon of Fatima.

It is clear, and simple, but worthless for two reasons. First of all because the psychological law that it formulates is a pure invention: no normal witness lets himself be prompted in this way! And also, because this law, although a complete fabrication, does not even apply to the phenomena it claims to explain. To do so the author is forced to distort the facts, or to miserably ignore them.

LONG-DISTANCE WITNESSES. Why, for example, does he not say a word about the village of Alburitel, more than nine miles from Fatima, where the whole population, which was not expecting anything, witnessed at the same moment exactly the same unusual phenomena?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE UNBELIEVERS. Moreover, even at Fatima, how can we maintain without a brazen lie that everyone was expecting a miracle or the apparition of the Holy Family? For it is a historical fact that numerous unbelievers were there, and numerous sectarians had come with the express purpose of shouting on the rooftops to everybody that they had seen nothing! Now, even the curious, such as the editor of *O Seculo* – for that matter, why does G. de Sede not cite his witness? – or the fanatics who passionately desired to see nothing, were obliged to confess that something had taken place.

On the evening of the 13th, Avelino de Almeida concluded his article by stressing that «free thinkers and other persons not overly concerned with religious matters» were «naturally impressed» by what they had seen. The typical example of these unbelievers who were shaken in their convictions is the Mayor of Santarem, Antonio de Bastos, who was so troubled that he wrote to his friend Avelino de Almeida to learn his innermost thoughts on the matter. The journalist answered him by his article in the *Illustração Portuguesa*.

We could easily quote the witness of Mario Godinho, this young engineer who was totally incredulous, and shaken up by the event; and for that matter, here is the testimony of the Baron of Alvaiazere, which is very indicative of the mentality of the majority of learned people at that time:

«Having come to Fatima, purely for a diversion (he declared before the commission of inquiry), considering everything I had heard on the apparitions to be just a joke, I met several friends there. I began making comments on the events in an ironic tone to the point where I antagonized several of them who thought otherwise.

«I was prepared to keep an open mind, regardless of what happened. I recalled this principle of Gustave Le Bon, which says that the individual influenced by a group cannot escape the hypnotic current that dominates it. And I took precautions not to let myself be influenced. In this state of mind, I witnessed the solar phenomenon.» He finishes his account by declaring: «I only know that I shouted: “I believe! I believe! I believe!” and that tears fell

from my eyes. I was in a state of wonder, in ecstasy before this manifestation of the Divine Power.»⁶⁶⁴

As for the testimony of the national Education Minister, Antonio Sergio, quoted by G. de Sede, here it is:

«When the sun appeared, there were light clouds that gathered around it and which, under the effect of the storm, were driven by gyratory movements that had nothing astonishing about them.»⁶⁶⁵

The storm? No other witness mentions it. But if the minister saw clouds “driven by gyratory movements”, that is hardly a banal phenomenon! As for explaining the whole phenomenon by the presence of “clouds gathered around the sun”, that would be affirming a phenomenon still more marvellous than the one related by the 70,000 normal witnesses! The sun would have had to descend very low indeed for the clouds to be able to be hooked around it in this way! In short, our witness, blinded by his passion, pathetically begins talking nonsense and his clumsy explanations betray him. He saw everything like the others, but his principles and his function do not allow him to admit it.

THE BELIEVERS ARE CREDIBLE WITNESSES. There is more. If by preference we invoke the statements of the sceptics as *ad hominem* arguments, it is very doubtful that their testimony is more credible than that of the believers.

The best proof that the immense capacity for autosuggestion attributed to them is a pure invention, is found in the fact that on September 13, Ti Marto himself or his spouse Olimpia, Maria Rosa or Carlos Mendes, Father Formigao or Father da Silva, etc, declared that they saw nothing, while the enthusiastic crowd around them described what it had seen!

A MIRACLE THAT WAS WAITED FOR, BUT UNFORESEEN AND UNFORESEEABLE. Let us recall finally that, although the faithful knew in advance the moment of the miracle, none of them could have guessed what its nature would be. Instead they envisioned a sudden end to the war, or an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Herself.⁶⁶⁶ What is certain is that none of the 70,000 witnesses could have imagined in advance the stupefying dance of the sun that everybody witnessed.

CONCLUSION: AN OBJECTIVE, LUMINOUS PHENOMENON. The

conclusion is firm, unquestionable: the solar prodigy of Fatima cannot be accounted for by any psychological explanation without a total blindness or flagrant bad faith. In no case can it be a question of subjective phantasms, imagined simultaneously by 70,000 witnesses, all of whom were the victims of illusion, autosuggestion, or hallucination! To affirm that is senseless and simply absurd.

It is reasonable to think that it was a concrete reality, a luminous atmospheric phenomenon which was perfectly objective, that was noticed by all⁶⁶⁷ and came normally into the course of their ordinary perceptions.

What then can the explanation be, what could have been the cause? Psychology cannot tell us any more than the natural sciences. They must give way to the highest rational science, which goes back to the creative First Cause...

III. METAPHYSICAL REASONING: THE WORK OF PROVIDENCE

If the extraordinary, supernatural character of the solar prodigy reasonably implies the intervention of the creative Cause, another very simple fact, which is independent of the first one, demonstrates it luminously and in all certitude: the solar prodigy was announced three months in advance by the three little shepherds of Aljustrel, while humanly speaking it could not have been foreseen.

THE PROPHECY OF THE EVENT. Indeed since July 13, the seers had announced that Our Lady had promised: «In October, I will work a miracle so that all may see and believe.» She repeated it on August 19 and September 13. This prophecy is also a certain historical fact.

Now, another indisputable fact is that all the atmospheric phenomena of October 13 unfolded in close connection with the apparition: it is above the holm oak that the mysterious cloud appeared. It is at an hour announced in advance that the rain suddenly stopped falling. «The rain stopped as if by magic»,⁶⁶⁸ a witness wrote. And finally, it was at the precise moment when Lucy, turning around, shouted to the crowd, «Look at the sun!» that the sun became abnormally visible, whirled upon itself, and danced, before appearing to be about to crush the earth by its frightening fall.

This exact, perfect coincidence between the words of the little seer and the

reality of the grandiose physical phenomena, observed by the whole crowd, demands an explanation. G. de Sede, not being able to supply one, preferred... to omit the prophecy in his account of the apparition of July 13!⁶⁶⁹ What an admission!

The only rational response, which common sense also spontaneously finds, and which the highest metaphysical wisdom affirms with certitude, is however easy: it is the same sovereign Intelligence, the same all-powerful Spirit that worked the marvellous prodigy and announced it three months in advance to the humble shepherds. To affirm it is no longer making an act of faith, it is giving the only explanation of the event that is fully rational, and really scientific. Never has anybody been able – or will be able! – to propose another. For regardless of whatever wonderful progress they may make in the future, the natural sciences will never be able to explain... a prophecy. “That belongs to another order”, as Pascal might have said.⁶⁷⁰

IV. THEOLOGY: A STRIKING MIRACLE

As for the discernment of spirits – for God sometimes permits the evil Spirit to work prodigies – this is a task of theological science. Is it God or the Devil that is manifesting himself by extraordinary phenomena? Theology must decide the question.

In the case of Fatima the conclusion is easy! For in all the circumstances surrounding the extraordinary events at the Cova da Iria, none appears contrary to the doctrine of the Church, or its morals, or is otherwise unfitting. On the contrary... The calm, the exemplary piety, the courage of this innumerable crowd, its perfect order, won the admiration of the journalists.⁶⁷¹

A MIRACLE GUARANTEED BY THE CHURCH. Henri Fesquet, blindly repeating the article of Father Jacquemet, writes perfidiously:

«The Church refused to decide in favour of the solar prodigy which is claimed to have taken place on October 13... (sic) Let us note that the Bishop of Leiria discreetly ignored this part of the events of Fatima.»⁶⁷²

This is false! But neither Henri Fesquet nor Father Jacquemet took the trouble to read the letter *A Divina Providencia* of October 13, 1930, which proclaimed the

Church's recognition of the authenticity of the Fatima apparitions. Although there is no mention of the solar prodigy in the few lines of the canonical formula where the Bishop of Leiria «declares the visions of the children worthy of belief» and «officially authorizes the cult of Our Lady of Fatima», in the same letter Bishop da Silva explicitly mentions the solar prodigy and affirms its miraculous character very clearly:

«The solar phenomenon of October 13 was the most marvellous of all, and made the greatest impression on all those who had the good fortune to witness it... And this crowd witnessed all the manifestations of the sun which paid homage to the Queen of Heaven and earth. This solar phenomenon... which was not natural, etc.»⁶⁷³

By the voice of the Bishop of Leiria, the authority of the Church solemnly confirmed the unanimous sentiment of the Portuguese people, formulated by the multitude at the very moment of the prodigy: «Miracle! Miracle!... Marvel! Marvel!»

III. FAITH: «A SPECTACULAR SIGN»

«We have seen the Sign of God! We have seen the Sign of God!» exclaimed the enthusiastic pilgrims, spontaneously using the most exact biblical term, which also evokes the mysterious prophecy of the Apocalypse: «*Signum magnum apparuit in coelo... A great sign appeared in Heaven!*»⁶⁷⁴ (Apoc. 12:1)

What was the meaning of the prodigious miracle? All recognized it, even at that very moment, as a marvellous manifestation of God the Creator, a visible proof of His existence and greatness.

I. THE SIGN OF GOD: TRIUMPH OF THE FAITH

“THE HEAVENS PROCLAIM THE GLORY OF GOD”. The miracle was a dazzling spectacle of radiant beauty. The description given by Madalena de Martel Patricio, a journalist, witnesses to it eloquently:

«A cry went up from every mouth. Thousands of God's creatures, transported by faith to Heaven, fell on their knees on the sodden ground...

«The light turned a beautiful blue as if it had come through the stained-glass windows of a cathedral and spread itself over the people who knelt with outstretched hands. The blue faded slowly and then the light seemed to pass through yellow glass.

«People wept and prayed with uncovered heads in the presence of a miracle they had awaited. The seconds seemed like hours, so vivid were they.»⁶⁷⁵

Another witness recalled simply: «I was very happy, because it was very beautiful.»⁶⁷⁶

“GOD IS GREAT!” «“What did you think at the moment of the miracle?” Ti Marto was asked. “What did I think? That it was the power of God!” “And now, what do you think?” “I think the same thing: *how God is great!*”»⁶⁷⁷ The Sign expected and observed by all was before all else this striking manifestation of the Divine Omnipotence: God allowed a glimpse of His Glory to be seen, showing that He is the Creator of the cosmos and its Sovereign Lord. At that moment, there was nothing more to be done than to kneel in the mud, join one’s hands, and adore His Majesty.

This is what almost all the pilgrims did spontaneously. But not all. And history relates to us the movements of just indignation and scandal of some zealous witnesses, confronted with the stupid or proud inertia of some rebellious souls:

«Perched on the steps of the Torres Novas bus, an old man... with a gentle and energetic face, recites the Credo in a loud voice, turned towards the sun... Then I saw him address those around him who left their hats on. He vehemently requested that *they take their hats off before such an extraordinary demonstration of the existence of God.*

«Identical scenes took place in other places. A lady cried out in tears, as if suffocated with emotion: “What a pity! There are still men who do not uncover themselves *before such a stupefying spectacle!*”»⁶⁷⁸

Another witness reports: «An old man with a white beard began to attack the atheists aloud and challenged them to say whether or not something supernatural had occurred.»⁶⁷⁹

Here is a proof that even the most striking miracle cannot by itself compel a soul

to have faith. There must be a movement of the heart responding to the gift of grace, and the will of man – what a terrible mystery! – remains always free to refuse it. However, at the sight of the miracle, many were converted, and left us moving accounts of it. In any case, the incredulous, even according to the editor of *O Seculo*, left the Cova da Iria very shaken in their unbelief.

THE JOY “OF THE TRIUMPHANT”. As for the good faithful people, they left Fatima filled with joy, having received an immense strengthening of their faith from seeing the Sign of God. Scorned and persecuted by a minority of sectarians, atheists and fanatics, they saw the solar miracle as a wonderful response of God and the Madonna in their favour.

Let us quote once more the report of *O Seculo*, which is very instructive.

«The crowd dispersed rapidly and without any incidents, without any disorders or the need for the police patrol to intervene. The first pilgrims to leave are those who arrived first, with their shoes on top of their heads or hanging from their sticks. *Their souls full of joy*, they go to spread the good news in the villages where there are still some people left who did not come here.

«And the priests? Some of them had shown up on site, mixing with the curious spectators rather than with the pilgrims avidly desirous of heavenly favours. Perhaps one or two of them could not conceal the satisfaction that appears so often *on the faces of those who are triumphant...*»⁶⁸⁰

Yes indeed! – why deny it? – the miracle of Fatima was a triumph for the faith! The triumph of God and the triumph of Mary Immaculate, His Mother! «After the miracle», says Professor Ferreira Borges, «the crowd retired chanting the Salve Regina, in profound recollection and perfect order. I recognized some fierce sectarians, looking silent and meditative...»⁶⁸¹ For them the event was the most pressing, the most convincing call to conversion.

UNBELIEF CONFOUNDED. Parroting Voltaire, Renan wrote: «Miracles do not take place where they ought to... A miracle in Paris, before so many of the learned, would put an end to so many doubts! But alas, that never happens. No miracle ever took place before those who could discuss and make critical judgments on it.»⁶⁸²

Well, yes there has! At Fatima, God seems to have willed to give a striking response to the challenge of His deniers: three months in advance, He made known the place, day and hour of the miracle. All «the competent experts» could be there, and afterwards they could «discuss and make critical judgments on the miracle».

Those who were present were quite careful to avoid this. As for those who were not present, we must read their articles in the Portuguese press of the time, to see the pathetic disarray they were in. In the *Diario de Noticias* of October 15, the facts are objectively recognized, but to prevent the reader from concluding in favour of the miracle, the author repeats the magic word «suggestion», without any other clarification or explanation! *A Capital* demanded a search for «the practical joker who fabricated this atrocious stunt.» Finally, all the heralds of “free thought” were reduced to a few variants on just one theme: the sun could not have infringed on the untouchable laws of astronomy! For lack of a better argument, they contented themselves with such satires as the following: «What really makes us swoon is that the sun, such a respectable star... also took part in the feast and began dancing.. . in spite of its considerable age of thousands of centuries...»⁶⁸³ etc, etc.

«In intellectual circles», writes Barthas, «the controversy was settled by an article by Antonio Sardinha, chief of the “integralist” movement who not long before had converted from impiety to faith, writing in the royalist journal *A Monarquia*.» In an article entitled “*O Milagre de Fatima*” (November 8), he lambasts the mediocrity of the arguments against the supernatural, showing the intellectual poverty of the freethinkers, and the “fossilism” of their ideas. Nobody responded to this attack; «the frogs of the freethinking press stopped croaking», said Costa Brochado.⁶⁸⁴ And since that time? Nothing! At least, nothing serious, nothing intelligent, nothing which might have added some serious argument to the stale old masonic refrains of 1917.

A MIRACLE FOR OUR TIMES. Like the miracle of Lourdes, like the Holy Shroud of Turin,⁶⁸⁵ the solar prodigy of Fatima marks an intervention of God in history, which is open to the investigation of science. It also remains to this day a striking proof in favour of the Catholic faith.

To be sure, our faith had no need of such signs, being solidly founded on other grounds. But since innumerable minds, influenced by the Kantian critique which is as arbitrary as it is destructive, had become incapable of reading the creative

action of God in the great book of nature, unable to recognize in each bit of progress by science a new proof of the sovereign intelligence which orders the universe, in His great mercy God decided to intervene in an extraordinary manner in our history, in such a way that His action, being directly visible and tangible, could be observed scientifically. The solar prodigy of Fatima is a miracle for our time.

But it is also a message: it is for the sake of Mary, His Immaculate Mother, that God worked this unheard of, incomparable prodigy. «*Fecit mihi magna qui potens est...* He who is mighty has done great things for me!» (Lk. 1:49) Yes, at Fatima it is through Her and for Her that the Most High and Almighty Lord «showed the power of His arm», and manifested His Glory. Such is indeed the first purpose of the Miracle...

II. THE SIGN OF MARY: PROOF OF HER APPARITIONS, GUARANTEE OF HER MESSAGE

«In October *I* will work a miracle», Our Lady had sovereignly declared on July 13. And on October 13, it was at Her efficacious gesture that the wonderful “dance of the sun” began: «Opening Her hands», the seer relates, «She made them reflect on the sun, and, as She went up, the reflection of Her own light continued to project itself on the sun.»

Thus it was She who promised this striking miracle, which is incontestably the work of the Divine Omnipotence. She announced it three months in advance, and at Her gesture it took place. In other words, the spectacular sign is indissolubly linked with Her apparitions, Her words, and Her message. It is the response of the Queen of Heaven to the insistent request of the humble shepherdess: «I would like to ask You to tell us who You are, and to work a miracle so that all may believe that You are appearing.» The response surpasses all expectation, for it has such a magnitude and splendour that nobody would have dared to imagine the like.

Since then, all doubt is excluded: Yes, it is indeed the Immaculate Virgin who on each month since May 13, came down from Heaven to speak with the three little shepherds, and pass on Her message to them. This miracle, the grand finale of the cycle of the six apparitions, is henceforth the indisputable proof of their authenticity. It is also the divine guarantee that Her words were faithfully passed

on by the seers chosen by Her. For God is truthful in all His works, and He could not work a prodigy which would risk leading His faithful creatures into error. The great Solar Miracle thus appears to us as the visible, tangible, incontestable seal that God willed to place on the apparitions of Fatima, on the prophecies, promises and terrible warnings that His Immaculate Mother came to reveal at the Cova da Iria. The solar prodigy is the incontestable proof, and perhaps something more...

III. FROM THE GREAT MIRACLE TO THE GREAT SECRET

Is not the «dance of the sun» also the sensible sign, the symbol of the two great themes of the secret between which the whole drama of our century is unfolding?

THE SIGN OF THE COMING CHASTISEMENT: A CALL TO CONVERSION. Even before the mysterious nocturnal aurora of January 25, 1938, is not the solar prodigy of October 13 already in a veiled manner «the great sign» given by God «that He is about to punish the world for its crimes», as Our Lady said in Her great secret?

In any case, it certainly had the appearance of a terrible chastisement hurled by God on sinful humanity, to persuade it to be converted. A few moments earlier, Our Lady had demanded sorrowfully: «Men must amend their lives! They must ask pardon for their sins, they must not offend Our Lord God any more, for He is already too much offended!»

Even before the pilgrims knew about these words, the “Sign of Heaven” made them understand its meaning, for it spoke to them in such a clear and expressive language.

A SALUTARY FEAR. Indeed it was a terrible moment when the sun appeared to be about to fall upon the crowd: «They cried out: “Oh, Jesus, we shall all be killed! Oh, Jesus, we shall all be killed!” Others called on Our Lady to save them and recited acts of contrition.»⁶⁸⁶ Father John Gomes Menitra told John Haffert: «When I saw the sun fall on us, I shouted: “We are going to die!”... I knelt on the pebbles, joined my hands, and asked pardon of the Lord for all my sins.»⁶⁸⁷

AN IMAGE OF THE END OF THE WORLD. At Alburitel, the terror of the

crowd was none the lesser. Here is the testimony of Father Inacio Lourenço:

«The sun suddenly seemed to come down in a zigzag, menacing the earth. Terrified, I ran and hid myself among the people, who were weeping and *expecting the end of the world* at any moment.

«Near us was an unbeliever who had spent the morning mocking at the simpletons who had gone off to Fatima just to see an ordinary girl. He now seemed to be paralyzed, his eyes fixed on the sun. Afterwards he trembled from head to foot, and lifting up his arms fell on his knees in the mud, crying out to Our Lady.

«Meanwhile the people continued to cry out and to weep, asking God to pardon their sins... We all ran to the two chapels in the village, which were soon filled to overflowing.»⁶⁸⁸

Many people at the Cova da Iria as well as Alburitel believed that it was the end of the world. «I was not afraid, but *I thought that the world was going to end*», declared José d'Assunção.⁶⁸⁹

Is not the solar prodigy of October 13 one of the signs announcing the *parousia* (the Second Coming of Christ), prophesied by Our Lord in His great eschatological discourse? «*There will be signs in the sun*, the moon and the stars... The powers of Heaven will be shaken.» (Lk. 21:25.) The resemblance is striking. The events of Fatima, with their grandiose character, unprecedented in the whole history of humanity, undoubtedly have an eschatological dimension which little by little we will be able to see.

Although the solar prodigy perhaps marked the dawn of the “last times”, the solar prodigy was not the sign of an imminent end of the world. For it also evokes the other major theme of the secret, the revelation of the great design of God for our times, by the mediation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

THE SIGN OF MERCY. «When the people realized that the danger was over», says Father Lourenço, «there was an explosion of joy and everyone joined in thanksgiving and praise to Our Lady...»⁶⁹⁰ And Mario Godinho adds: «From these thousands of mouths I heard shouts of joy and love for the Most Holy Virgin. And then I believed. I was certain that I had not been the victim of an illusion. I had seen the sun as I will never see it again.»⁶⁹¹

No, it was not the end of the world! The miracle graciously promised by the Mother of Mercy would not end in a frightful cataclysm. With a great supernatural wisdom, Ti Marto declared to Father Messias Dias Coelho: «No, I was not the slightest bit afraid. God was not going to destroy the world that way!»⁶⁹² Instead of the dreaded chastisement, the pilgrims had the happy surprise of finding themselves perfectly dry, and during this last apparition of Our Lady there were even two miraculous healings.⁶⁹³

“BLESSED VISION OF PEACE”. Far from coming for judgment or chastisement, Our Lady had announced as early as August 19 and September 13 that in October «Saint Joseph will come with the Child Jesus *to give peace to the world*, and Our Lord will give His blessing to the people.» On this frightened crowd which asked for grace and begged for pardon, the Holy Family poured out its blessings from the heights of Heaven. Terrible chastisements threaten us, to be sure! But God has a great design of Mercy: «He wishes to establish in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.»

IV. A SIGN OF HOPE: THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, SALVATION OF THE WORLD

«*Signum magnum apparuit in coelo, Mulier amicta sole...* A great sign appeared in Heaven, a woman clothed with the sun...» (Apoc. 12:1) This sign of the Apocalypse is a great sign of hope. Was it not fulfilled at Fatima on October 13, 1917, when the Immaculate Virgin appeared in the sky, «more brilliant than the sun»?

It is a vision of hope, and a pledge of imminent victory. Like the mustard seed in the Gospel, in 1917 the mystery of Fatima had only begun. For Our Lady had promised to return to take our history into Her hands, to remind us of the chastisements which threaten us, to renew Her requests, and announce with assurance Her final Victory.

The unheard of prodigy of the “dance of the sun” is the pledge of Her all-powerful mediation. Yes, Her words will be fulfilled: «In the end My Immaculate Heart will triumph, the Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, it will be converted and a certain period of peace will be given to the world.»

How can we hasten this Hour of the Universal Reign of the Holy Hearts of Jesus

and Mary? By applying ourselves now to «making known and loved» these blessed and unique Hearts of Jesus and Mary, our final salvation.

APPENDIX I

THE MYTH OF COLLECTIVE HALLUCINATION

In reading the historical article on the question, presented by H.F. Ellenberger in an authoritative work,⁶⁹⁴ we learn that the principal source of the myth of collective hallucination, which is still frequently admitted as though it were a scientific truth, is the work of Gustave Le Bon, *The Psychology of the Crowd*, published in 1896.

It is interesting and even amusing to refer to it. This work, written in a lively style in which gratuitous assertions and gross sophisms follow each other almost uninterruptedly, enjoyed an immense success.

On every page Le Bon affirms the erroneous thesis that as soon as people come together, they completely lose the use of their reason, become incapable of observation and their statements lose all credibility. If we are to believe him, collective hallucinations are habitual, quite common: «The observations made by crowds simply represent the illusion of an individual who, by way of contagion, has planted a suggestion in others.»⁶⁹⁵ «The most questionable events are certainly those which have been observed by the greatest number of people.» etc.

Now in these ten pages, which are the privileged source of the myth of collective hallucination, G. Le Bon has found only one example which has the appearance of being convincing. The example has become a classic... for good reason: that it is the only one that exists. Here it is:

THE SAILORS OF THE “BELLE-POULE”

«The frigate *la Belle-Poule* was cruising at sea, looking for the warship *le Berceau*, from which it had been separated by a violent storm. It was broad daylight, under a bright sun. Suddenly the lookout signals that a small craft is in distress. The crew looked over to the point spotted out and everybody, both officers and sailors, clearly perceives a raft full of people, towed by some small

boats with distress signals on them. *However it was only a collective hallucination.*

«Admiral Desfosses equipped a small boat to assist the castaways. As they approached, the sailors and officers saw “a crowd of men waving, extending their hands, and they heard the dull and confused noise of a great number of voices.”

«When the small boat arrived, they found only some branches covered with leaves. Before such palpable evidence, the hallucination vanished.

«In this example we see very clearly the mechanism of *collective hallucination* in action, just as we have described it.»⁶⁹⁶

FROM MYTH TO AUTHENTIC HISTORY

Analyzing this example, Ellenberger has no difficulty showing that in no way does it confirm Le Bon's thesis. Indeed the latter was careful to cleverly isolate the fact reported from its whole context, which makes it perfectly understandable.

1. The crew, which was afflicted with malaria, was in a state of great physical exhaustion.
2. The sailors feared that the warship, which had disappeared after a hurricane, had sunk, leaving three hundred victims.
3. For a whole month while the search was going on, the crew was in a state of anxiety, and the thought of those who had disappeared had become a veritable obsession with them.
4. The warm air was stirring on the horizon, and the sea currents were carrying “a mass of large trees” (not “a few branches”!).
5. The sailor on the lookout, in the face of intense illumination, perceived objects whose nature he could not distinguish, and cried out: «Disabled craft in sight!» And this was the point of departure of the illusion, which was easily understandable, and gradually spread to the whole crew.

We should speak rather of a “mirage”, or if the term “collective hallucination” must be retained, its nature should be specified more clearly, and the definite causes that provoked it must be pointed out: «physical exhaustion, mental depression, a dominant preoccupation which over the course of a month had become an obsession, and finally the sensorial factors which favoured the creation of an illusion.»⁶⁹⁷

We could even go further and ask if it was a true hallucination in the strict sense. Was it not merely an illusion placing an imaginary interpretation on a real perception? This occurs frequently but has nothing to do with “collective hallucination”, according to Le Bon.⁶⁹⁸

In a word, true hallucination always appears as a pathological factor, which takes place only in subjects afflicted in some way by a grave disturbance, be it physical, nervous or psychic. Thus, it is sheer fantasy and an absurdity to pretend to explain the solar prodigy of Fatima by any kind of “collective hallucination”. The only solution which adequately explains all the facts is to recognize the miracle.

APPENDIX II

HYPOTHESES ON THE NATURE OF THE SOLAR MIRACLE

«SCIENCE WILL EXPLAIN»

First of all let us mention a frequent objection: Granted, it is said, in the actual state of our knowledge, the atmospheric prodigies observed at Fatima are inexplicable, going only by the interplay of natural laws. But why not believe that in the future, new progress in our knowledge of nature will allow us to explain it?

The answer is simple. In the discovery of natural causes and effects science continues to make progress. But a miracle is not just a mysterious, inexplicable phenomenon. It corresponds to the will of a man, and takes place at his word: science will never have any new contribution on the multiplication of the loaves or the resurrection of Lazarus, which took place *at the words of Jesus*. The same is true of the miracle of Fatima, which only took place at the precise moment when the seer shouted: «Look at the sun!» With this intervention of the

messenger of God, who acts in His name and fortified with His power, we are outside the interplay of natural causes and effects.

A MINIMIZING HYPOTHESIS

A Portuguese doctor, Diogo Pacheco de Amorim, once believed it was possible to maintain that perhaps the solar miracle consisted only in the fact that it had been announced three months in advance. All other aspects of the prodigy, he claimed, could be explained naturally.⁶⁹⁹

Without even discussing his arguments, we can say that his thesis is incoherent: indeed how can it be maintained that there was a true prophecy of an atmospheric event, and that the whole miracle consists precisely in the prophecy alone, while in the very words which announce it the Virgin is supposed to have been mistaken! For She did not say: «There will be a sign in the sky»; She said: «In October, I will work a miracle.»

This alone is enough to prove that the hypothesis is untenable.

A SUPERNATURAL PERCEPTION?

Was the vision of the solar prodigy a sort of participation by the crowd in the supernatural vision of the three children? That is possible, and in this case the dance of the sun is of the same nature as all the atmospheric signs observed in previous months,⁷⁰⁰ with this difference: on October 13, as Our Lady had promised, all the pilgrims received the privilege, the grace, of contemplating the prodigy.

THE NATURAL PERCEPTION OF A LUMINOUS PHENOMENON OF MIRACULOUS ORIGIN?

Another hypothesis seems equally plausible: that the luminous phenomena were produced miraculously by God, but were naturally visible to all according to the ordinary laws of perception, without any need for a special favour from God. In short, in this case it would be a perception as natural as that of a rainbow or an eclipse.

The miracle then is spectacular, cosmic, atmospheric. What might its nature be? A scientific hypothesis has been proposed by G. Cordonnier, a specialist in optics⁷⁰¹. We submit it to the judgment of our reader:

«Everyone knows the effect of a prism when placed in the path of a beam of white light. For one thing, the beam of light “bends”, and it breaks into various colours of the rainbow; the beams of the various wavelengths bend at a different angle. If one looks at a lamp through a prism, the lamp seems to suddenly move and take on colours. Instead of a simple prism, let us take two “half-prisms” placed in independently swivelling circular mounts, each operable by one hand. The whole thing will produce a bending of the light somewhere between zero and a certain maximum, and the direction of the bending will also continuously change. The lamp will “dance”, and give off rays of all different colours.

«Let us perfect our experimental device still more. Let us mix in a test tube two transparent non-soluble liquids of the same density – like vinegar and oil in a salad dressing – both liquids having very different indices of refraction. Let us look through our test tube at a piece of dark cloth about a yard away, in which has been made a small circular hole about one-third of an inch in diameter, and through which will shine a bright white lamp. This will have the apparent diameter of the sun. When the liquids aren’t moving, we will see a normal “sun”. If we turn the whole thing, one of the liquids will take in the other the appearance of a rapidly spinning nebulous spiral. We must close one eye, because each eye will see a comparable but very different image. Our open eye will see a dancing “sun”, animated by jarring movements, cartwheeling upon itself, and hurling rays and spirals of coloured light, As the eye is moved sideways, it reaches a point where the whirlpool is centred and appears stationary. And so the bending of the “sun” varies suddenly according to whether the beam of light passes through the centre of the whirlpool or not. After some experiments a movie-maker could produce a very valuable film of the Miracle of Fatima on October 13, 1917...

«We have said enough to conclude that the “Sign” was produced by the creation of a gigantic “cosmic whirlwind” on the trajectory going from the sun to Fatima. This whirlwind would profoundly change the normal refractive characteristics of space by a sort of “rotational polarization”....

«Seen through this extraordinary “optic instrument”, the sun seemed to “cartwheel upon itself”, to shoot off coloured rays, to tremble, to increase in size,

to shine more brightly, to dance and suddenly leap, after two lulls during which the whirlwind was briefly delayed. Like all optical instruments, this whirlwind had a limited area in which its effects could be seen. And the prodigy was visible within a range of thirty miles, where there was no observatory to record it.»

These excerpts, although taken from an article and a periodical which are often unreliable, are nevertheless suggestive. Their chief interest is to introduce a scientific rationality in the process of the miracle, and to give us an idea of how the miracle might have worked.

However, we should be careful not to exaggerate the importance of a hypothesis which of course remains as disputable as it is incomplete.

Let us distinguish the areas and degrees of certitude: the highly relative character of a hypothesis on the “how” of the prodigy does not negate the absolute certitude of the historical fact and the solid rational basis of the demonstration proving the miracle! The question of the “how” of the miracle is entirely secondary. Whichever hypothesis we adopt, it does not detract from the spectacular, divine character of the miracle.

DID EVERYBODY SEE IT?

Did all the pilgrims present at the Cova da Iria, without exception, see the solar miracle? Such is the question we must now try to resolve.

CONTRADICTING TESTIMONIES? «Others», writes Gerard de Sede, «saw nothing at all. This was the case with the parish priest of Penacova, who could not bring himself to believe in the miracle, even during the dance of the sun.» Where did that come from? Gerard de Sede is careful not to indicate the precise source of his information! But here it is: during the canonical process Manuel Antonio de Paula related that the parish priest of Penacova, even though he saw perfectly well «a little cloud, which was fairly dense» above the holm oak, could not be convinced that it was not of smoke.

«Even during the dance of the sun, he could not bring himself to believe in the miracle. Seeing the colour red on the clothes of the people, he explained to Mr. de Paula: “They are all wearing red shawls.” The witness charitably corrected him, showing him it was impossible for so many people to be wearing the same colour clothing. Moreover, the ecclesiastical sceptic soon saw the same immense

crowd clothed in a golden yellow.»⁷⁰²

So the parish priest of Penacova saw perfectly well the phenomena observed by everybody else! They seemed so objective, so “natural” to him, that he naively refused to believe that there was a miracle!

There is another discordant testimony put forward by G. de Sede: that of the lawyer, Pinto Coelho. In the Catholic journal *A Ordem*, he plays the devil’s advocate and claimed that there was no miracle. Yet it is certain that our lawyer saw the same phenomena as all the other witnesses. He himself admits as much:

«The sun, at one moment surrounded with scarlet flame, at another aureoled in yellow and deep purple, seemed to be in an exceedingly fast and whirling movement, at times appearing to be loosened from the sky and to be approaching the earth, strongly radiating heat.»⁷⁰³

Here is the important fact, which alone concerns us. The explanations advanced by our lawyer are so poor that we need not even examine them: «A collective psychology was established in the crowd, etc.»⁷⁰⁴ We have heard that tune before!

Finally G. de Sede quotes... the testimony of Lucy, who declared on several occasions: «I myself saw nothing!» Indeed, absorbed by the Vision that she contemplated during this time, contrary to all the other pilgrims, she did not see the solar miracle in all its successive phases. That is easily understandable.

And that is all! It is astonishing that G. de Sede was unable to quote a single valid testimony of somebody who clearly affirmed that he saw nothing!

“THE CASE” OF IZABEL BRANDAO DE MELO. Yet there is such a case – the only one, as far as we know. It is the case of Izabel Brandao de Melo. On October 31, 1917, in a letter to a Swiss priest, Father Gelase, after having described the prodigy she continued:

«This is what was said by those around me, and what thousands of people affirm that they saw. As for myself, I saw nothing! *I could indeed look at the sun and I was terribly agitated* to hear everybody shouting that there were extraordinary signs in the sky. I believe that I was not found worthy by Our Lord to see these phenomena, but in my soul I had no need to see them to believe in the apparition

of the Holy Virgin to the children.»⁷⁰⁵

In 1950, Father Martindale mentioned “two English ladies” who had not seen anything either.⁷⁰⁶ What, exactly, was he referring to? In 1974, it seemed that they had metamorphosized... for the same author then wrote: «We know of two devout Portuguese women who saw nothing at all...»⁷⁰⁷

The information is vague. Undoubtedly it refers once again to the same Izabel Brandao de Melo, who had decidedly become the star witness! In his article against Fatima, the future Cardinal Journet did not fail to mention her: «I have heard of a very cultured Portuguese lady who, for her greater desolation, saw nothing.»⁷⁰⁸

Is this one witness enough to be able to say, with Dom Jean-Nesmy: «There are however some discordant voices. Some people saw nothing.»⁷⁰⁹? For is it not already surprising that this devout lady affirms: «I was able to stare at the sun.»? Now it was a clear sky. Is not this fact by itself extraordinary and abnormal? She also confesses that she was «terribly agitated...»

Father A. Richard writes, and with reason: «If a few persons in this huge crowd claim they saw nothing, that can be explained by the peculiarities and inattention of certain people, and still more by their fear when faced with these unusual phenomena on October 13, to the point where all their powers of sensation were hindered, so that they could not testify to anything – like the victim of an accident who no longer remembers anything.

«A few years ago we questioned a Portuguese woman who later became a nun, and who was present at the Cova da Iria on October 13. At that time she was a young woman of nineteen. She could not remember at all “the beautiful colours of the rainbow” which were described by so many witnesses. She had realized only one thing: she was going to die, the world was going to end. Right near her two people had fainted. The terrible anguish that gripped her had kept her from discerning all the rich diversity of the phenomenon.»⁷¹⁰

This case is not unique: «My wife – we had been married only a short time – fainted, and I was too upset to attend to her», recalls Alfredo da Silva Santos. «My brother-in-law, Joao Vassallo, supported her on his arm. I fell on my knees *oblivious of everything* and when I got up *I don't know what I said*. I think I began to cry out like the others.»⁷¹¹

A few other discrepancies in details, have been found in various statements of the witnesses. This is completely normal when it is a question of such varied phenomena, whether simultaneous or successive, and moreover such unusual and impressive ones.⁷¹²

Thus after examining the question we can affirm – at least until solid witnesses to the contrary appear – that everybody present at the Cova da Iria, as well as Alburitel, could see the prodigious solar phenomenon.

At the end of his investigation Father de Marchi could write: «Up to the present we have not met a single person among the many we have questioned who has not confirmed the phenomenon.»⁷¹³

In 1958, Father Richard noticed the same unanimity among all the witnesses he had encountered: «For them, there was no question. They could not even imagine anyone asking the question whether somebody had not seen anything.» The same goes for Alburitel. «Did everybody around you see it?» Canon Lourenço, who was nine years old in 1917, answered this question of Father Richard without hesitation: «I am absolutely sure that everybody saw it.»⁷¹⁴

In 1960, John Haffert reached the same conclusion: all those who simply bothered to look saw the great solar sign.

In conclusion, it would be astonishing if it had been otherwise. On July 13 Our Lady had promised: «*In October, I will work a miracle so that all may see and believe.*» The most faithful Virgin kept Her promise.

PART TWO: THE CRITICAL STUDY

INTRODUCTION

THE ELEMENTS OF THE PROBLEM

The critical problem on the subject of Fatima is twofold. First of all, as with all other apparitions or extraordinary phenomena, there is the question of the *supernatural character of the facts*. From this point of view, the apparitions of Fatima in 1917 present quite the same problem as the apparitions of rue du Bac, Lourdes or Pontmain.

But Fatima presents an additional difficulty. Father Alonso, the great expert who was officially entrusted with establishing its critical history, expresses it in a few words: «The greatest difficulty that Fatima presents from the historical, critical and literary point of view for whoever studies it seriously is *the progressive augmentation of the facts and the message.*»⁷¹⁵

What a contrast with Lourdes, where the apparitions and the diffusion of the message are narrowly circumscribed in time! The parallel is most striking. The Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette from February 11, 1858 until July 16 of the same year. The very evening of the first apparition, the seer told her sister Toinette everything, and then told her mother. Two days later, she spoke of it to her confessor, and on February 15 she mentioned it to Sister Damian, at school. She was immediately harassed with questions and interrogated innumerable times. Except for the three secrets which Our Lady had ordered her not to tell anybody, and the prayer Our Lady taught, to be used by Bernadette alone, Bernadette answered questions on everything, with no reservations. Already, in 1858, the message was perfectly well known. Only a few very secondary details were added later on in the six written accounts drawn up by Bernadette between 1861 and 1866. Thus at Lourdes, practically everything became known immediately, and eight years after the apparitions the seer had completely fulfilled her mission as witness.

And at Fatima? Precisely the opposite happens! It seems that since 1917 the message has continually grown. There is no end to the accounts of new apparitions or divine communications which Lucy continued to enjoy: in 1925 and 1926, in 1927, 1929, 1939... in 1941, 1943... and here we must stop for lack of further information.

However, there is more. From 1935 to 1941, in her *Memoirs* Sister Lucy reports, even for the apparitions of 1917, certain words of Our Lady and facts which she had kept secret until that time: the first two parts of the great Secret of July 13, 1917 were not revealed until 1942! As for the third part, written down in 1944, it has not yet been divulged. Fatima is far from being over with. It continues. Some, not without some disquiet, say: “There is no end to it!”

THE GROWTH OF THE MESSAGE

«This very fact, even if it is not proper to Fatima alone, very early on aroused first the interest, and then the reservations of a good many critics», Father Alonso writes. «In this progressive growth of the facts and the message, was there not perhaps introduced, albeit in good faith, some human element, mixing in with the work of God and obscuring it?»⁷¹⁶ There is the whole problem, which became especially acute during the 40’s, after the appearance of works which drew quite generously on the four *Memoirs* which Sister Lucy had just written. Suspiciously inclined critics certainly had reason to be astonished!

THE TWO VERSIONS COMPARED. To understand how much the message grew, it is enough to compare, point by point, the accounts in works appearing before 1938 with works appearing later. For example, *The Great Wonders of Fatima* by Vicomte de Montelo (alias Canon Formigao), published in 1930, compared with the great work of Father da Fonseca and Canon Barthas, *Fatima, Unprecedented Miracle*, which appeared in January 1943. What an astonishing contrast!

For brevity’s sake, let us compare the little pamphlet of Father Castelbranco, translated into French in 1939, *The Unprecedented Miracle of Fatima*,⁷¹⁷ with later editions of the same work.

In the account of 1939, everything began with «the unexpected apparition» of May 13, 1917, to the three shepherds, Lucy, Jacinta, and Francisco. This is the first notable omission: the apparitions of the angel in 1916, which are now common knowledge, are not mentioned at all. Then comes the account of the six apparitions of Our Lady, from May 13 to October 13. Granted, the description of the apparition is given in detail. The same goes for all the exterior events, the persecutions and follies of all kinds that the children had to endure — nothing is lacking. But what is surprising for well informed readers is the content of the

Message of Our Lady. What a contrast with the text published in the 40's! Even the words of Our Lady are briefer, in two or three places! Here are some significant details: in June, there is no mention of the vision of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, or the prophetic announcement of the special vocation of the three seers. On July 13, it is astonishing not to find even the slightest allusion to the "great secret"! On the interior life, the prayers and heroic sacrifices of the three children, again nothing.

In short, the message is reduced to this: Our Lady promises Heaven to Her three confidants, She insistently repeats Her request to recite the Rosary each day to obtain the end of the war, and She announces in July that She will work a great miracle on October 13. After a detailed account of the great miracle of the sun, the author mentions the prodigious development of the pilgrimages, the episcopal approval of 1930, and the marvellous religious and political renewal of Portugal brought on by Fatima. That is all...

It seems that the event has no more than a purely national significance. Although accompanied by spectacular signs never witnessed before, the message appears to be no more than a reminder and an echo of Lourdes and Pontmain: "Prayer and penance..." and the war will end. Paradoxically, everything which, since 1942, has been presented as the most important part is not yet present: neither the vision of hell nor the announcement of a Second World War. There are no allusions either to the role of Russia as a veritable scourge of God, or the request for its consecration, or above all, to the revelation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, so essential to the message. Such is the surprising fact, proper to Fatima, which poses such a serious problem for the critic.

FROM THE FIRST INTERROGATIONS TO THE MEMOIRS OF SISTER LUCY. The origin of this astonishing growth of the message is not mysterious; it has never been hidden from anyone. The first works, from 1921 to 1938-40 (following the information more or less hastily obtained by the authors), were composed following the interrogations of the seers: those of Father Ferreira, parish priest of Fatima, beginning in 1917; those of Canon Formigao, beginning in the same year; in 1924, that of the canonical commission, and finally those of various historians who were able to meet with Lucy (Fischer, Figueiredo). On the other hand, from 1938 on, the Portuguese authors, and later on the foreigners, begin to draw from a new, more abundant source of information, the *Memoirs of Sister Lucy*, as they began to appear between 1935 and 1941. Only in 1942 was all the new information brought together as a whole, for the benefit

of the general public. At the same time that Cardinal Schuster, Archbishop of Milan, published for the first time the principal themes of the secret of July 13, 1917, there appeared at Rome on April 13, 1942, with the imprimatur of Vatican City, the fourth edition of the great work of Father da Fonseca,⁷¹⁸ a Portuguese Jesuit of the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome, which reprinted long excerpts from the four Memoirs of Lucy. In May 1942, an Italian priest, Don Luigi Moresco, published a similar work, *Madonna di Fatima*, with a preface of Cardinal Schuster and Roman approval. Finally, on October of the same year, there appeared at Portugal the third edition of the work *Jacinta* of Canon Galamba, the only work at that time which dared to publish the exact and integral text of the Secret. The work bore a preface by Cardinal Cerejeira, Archbishop of Lisbon.⁷¹⁹

These source books, so brilliantly supported by the highest levels of the hierarchy, enjoyed a prodigious success: there are no less than seven editions of the work of Father da Fonseca in 1942-43. The French public became aware of it in 1943 by the adaptation of the work of Canon Barthas, *Fatima, Unprecedented Miracle*, and by his magnificent work, *It Was Three Small Children*, which has since been reprinted many times, and has now been translated into fifteen languages. These works, intended for the general public, multiplied, arousing everywhere fervour and enthusiasm for Our Lady of Fatima. Let us give one reliable figure: in France, under the pontificate of Pius XII, almost one hundred works were written on Fatima! This great movement of faith and devotion launched by the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on October 31, 1942, encouraged and supported by Pius XII, would last... until 1960.

OPPOSITION TO FATIMA

The “new message” of Fatima, however, did not gain unanimous support. Far from it! The “new themes” did not please everybody; they provoked a lively reaction on the part of a small minority of theologians. The message of 1917, being purely spiritual, did not disturb them. As one of these theologians, Father Dhanis, would later write: «Our Lady spoke of religious subjects, She recommended praying the Rosary and contrition for our sins...» There could be no objection to that! The message of 1942 had an entirely different tone. It would explode like a bomb: the Blessed Virgin is engaging in politics!

It is true that, in 1942, Don Moresco and Father da Fonseca had altered the text of the Secret so as to avoid citing Russia by name. We shall closely study this most unfortunate falsification of the texts, astonishing on the part of men who were undeniably in good faith. Although the Germans thought that they were, in fact, meant by the «impious propaganda» that Our Lady denounced (according to the expression that our Roman authors had substituted for “Russia” in the text of the Secret), the excessively enthusiastic allies of Bolshevism could not be mistaken for long.⁷²⁰ Since October 13, 1942, Cardinal Schuster had publicly interpreted the text in a clearly anti-communist sense: «When the promise of the Blessed Virgin is fulfilled», he said, «it will be the most beautiful and total victory of the Church over Bolshevism.» In Portugal, the integral text of the Secret had been published, and informed persons had acted quickly to make known its authentic meaning. The Message openly denounced Soviet Russia, and it alone, as the instrument of the chastisement of God for all humanity, because of the errors it would spread throughout the world, the wars and persecutions it would spread everywhere, as long as it was not converted.

Here was something infuriating for our theologians who were partisans of the Christian Democrats, and the Resistance: had not the Soviet Union been the spearhead of the “Crusade of the Democracies” against the one and only danger, Nazi Germany and Fascism? The Blessed Virgin was surely mistaken about the enemy... Germany, you see, was not even mentioned in the famous secret... It was very disturbing! Thus, the Blessed Virgin could not have said that. Was not this message, which dangerously intertwined religion and politics, very much open to question? Had not Lucy, the only survivor of the three witnesses, invented all that almost twenty years after the initial events? It was easily insinuated, it was written with a question mark after it, and before long certain people dared to say it openly.

In this context the critical problem of Fatima was posed with more violence and passion than ever.

CHAPTER I

THE MODERNIST SOLUTION OF FATHER DHANIS

THE SECRET CONTESTED

The cleverest, the most tenacious, and certainly the most effective offensive against Fatima was led, from 1944 on, by a Belgian Jesuit, Father Edouard Dhanis. Professor of theology at Louvain from 1933 to 1949, he then taught at the Gregorian University of Rome, where he was named Rector by Paul VI in 1963. With the passage of time, he appears today, on account of his apparent objectivity and prudent moderation, as the most unyielding and terrible adversary of Fatima. His role was decisive.

THE STAGES OF THE CONTROVERSY. He Opened the debate in 1944, with two long articles in Flemish,⁷²¹ entitled: *On the Apparitions and Predictions of Fatima*. At the beginning of 1945, he published these two texts, with only slight alterations, in the form of a book:⁷²² *On the Apparitions and Secret of Fatima: A Critical Contribution*. Although expressed with a thousand precautions and apparent prudence, the principal thesis of the work comes out clearly: Yes, the apparitions of the Virgin to the three little shepherds of Aljustrel in 1917 are undoubtedly authentic. This must be conceded, because he does not see how one can conclude otherwise... But as for what was added later on, all that is open to question and more than doubtful! There is nothing to compel us to believe in it, and it is better to stay with the “original version” of the message.

An initial response was made in 1946, by Father Jongen, a Dutch Montfort Father who, having had the favour of an audience with Sister Lucy, was already able to provide several interesting corrections.⁷²³ But it was not until 1951 that the best specialist of that time, Father da Fonseca, himself also a Jesuit, refuted point by point the work of his colleague.⁷²⁴

Father Dhanis, promoted in 1949 to professor at the Gregorian University, claimed he had been misunderstood. In an article published this time in French, *Concerning “Fatima and Criticism”*⁷²⁵ he tried to justify himself while accusing his colleague of distorting his thought.

The following year, the controversy revived. Father Veloso, S.J., in the same

Portuguese review, opposed the too personal and superficial defence of Father Dhanis with the solid arguments of Father da Fonseca.⁷²⁶ *Still Some Confusion and Errors on Fatima*.

Invited finally by his superiors to put an end to the scandal of an increasingly bitter controversy between various members of the Society, Father Dhanis, to close the debate, published an embarrassed and confused article which sought, by a series of confused circumlocutions, to soothe the ire of his adversaries, while letting his friends know that he had renounced none of his criticisms against Fatima.⁷²⁷ For we know from a reliable source, from the very mouth of one of his friends, a Jesuit in constant contact with him in Rome, that Father Dhanis never retracted any of his virulent criticisms against Fatima. We shall see later on what an uninterrupted series of promotions he received from the 1960's onwards before dying in 1978, honoured by all as one of the men in whom Pope Paul VI had the greatest trust.⁷²⁸

THE ONLY OPPONENT

In any case, Father Dhanis became the obligatory reference, the official cover for all the enemies of Fatima. What a windfall for them! Who would suspect the good faith and orthodoxy of the eminent professor at the Gregorian? While the brilliant refutations of the Fatima historians appeared in the Portuguese review *Broteria*, and remained in the most complete oblivion, the studies of Father Dhanis had a wide circulation in the intellectual climate of the post-war era. Numerous reviews praising his work were published far and wide. They graciously attributed to the Flemish original, which was not easily accessible, all the authority of a definitive and unanswerable criticism. An article of Cardinal Journet, in his review *Nova et Vetera*,⁷²⁹ and repeated the same year in *The Spiritual Life*,⁷³⁰ cannot pass unnoticed. Full of irony and violence against Fatima, it would gravely harm the cause of the apparitions. The future Cardinal, a great disciple and friend of Jacques Maritain, was also a friend of Msgr. Montini, who was then under-Secretary of State. Hence the importance of the debate for the future of the Church.

AT THE TIME OF THE COUNCIL. From then on, the word was spread within "learned" and progressive circles that the study of Father Dhanis, the only one with any "scientific value", cast a legitimate suspicion on a whole part of the message. Thus Father Laurentin in 1961: «For Fatima, the attempt at a critical

work by Father Dhanis, S.J., has provoked violent reactions (to discourage whoever might be tempted by an effort of the same nature). The intentions of Father Dhanis were loyal, his conclusions were essentially reserved; and as for his method, it was simply the same one that governs historical criticism in every domain, including Holy Scripture. Yet he was still treated as though he had written in an impious spirit.»⁷³¹ And Father Laurentin, who like the majority of anti-Fatima progressives, had no doubt read nothing else on the subject besides the one article in the *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, docilely parrots what he found there... Did not the negative conclusion of the learned Jesuit Dhanis dispense one from any serious and attentive examination of the documentation on Fatima?⁷³²

DURING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF FATIMA. After working on preparations for the Council, the Belgian Jesuit was named in 1962 consultor of the Holy Office, in 1963 rector of the Gregorian University; in September 1966 he was put in charge of the congress on “the Theology of Vatican II”, and in 1967 the Pope chose him to be “special secretary” of the first Synod of Bishops. At the moment of the great offensive against Fatima caused by the announcement of the pilgrimage of Paul VI on May 13, 1967, the authority of Father Dhanis seems to have increased still more. There is hardly an article which does not cite him without unlimited respect and admiration: the I.C.I.,⁷³³ Father Laurentin,⁷³⁴ Fesquet,⁷³⁵ and Father Rouquette in the magazine *Etudes*, from which this excerpt gives a good example of the tone: «It is certainly regrettable that no serious study has been devoted to the events of Fatima, analogous to those of Louis Bassette on La Salette, or Father Laurentin on Lourdes... Only one critical essay has been attempted... it comes from a theologian whose orthodoxy is *omni exceptione major* (above all suspicion), Father Dhanis, an influential member of the Theological Commission of the Council, and consultor of the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith...»

Apart from the work of Father Dhanis and some articles devoted to him, the abundant literature on Fatima supposedly designed for edification, is so poor that it drew these indignant lines, in 1948, from Cardinal Journet: «We are told there was a “dance” of the sun, a “rain of flowers”, and after that they tell us that “the greatest miracle”, the “miracle of miracles”, is the present flourishing condition of Portugal. For what do you take us, gentlemen? The imprimatur can protect you from heresies, but it cannot save you from foolishness. O great mysterious Virgin of the Gospel of Christmas and the Gospel of the Crucifixion! O great and

blessed Theotokos, at once formidable and maternal! Shall Your faithful, in these days when they need You more than ever, have nothing more to breathe than these paper flowers?»⁷³⁶ What hatred, and what scorn! But let us recall here only the relevant part: the decisive influence of Father Dhanis.

Father Rouquette quotes Cardinal Journet, who himself quotes an edition by Otto Karrer of the work of Dhanis... These critics always return there as to a great arsenal, a unique source of all the criticisms directed against Fatima within the bosom of the Church for thirty-five years. In May 1982, in an article on *The Secret of Fatima*, Father Laurentin again cites Father Dhanis as an authority on the matter.⁷³⁷ By everyone's admission then, Father Dhanis is the only Catholic critic seriously opposed to Fatima, or at least to the message in all its integrity. Those who followed him did nothing more than slavishly repeat what he had said, dwelling on his arguments, while more or less adding their own anti-Fatima passion.

I. THE THESIS OF FATHER DHANIS

We use the word “thesis” deliberately, in spite of all the disclaimers of the author. For if we read his articles on Fatima, in spite of all the interrogative turns of phrase, the hedged affirmations and the ever convenient shelter of a “simple hypothesis”, it appears that Father Dhanis *maintains a thesis*, although with great “prudence” (it was still under Pius XII, the “Pope of Fatima”!) but stubbornly and obstinately. Thus we will lay aside all the vain circumlocutions and concentrate only on the real content of this thought, which is perfectly clear in his first article,⁷³⁸ more and more camouflaged in later studies, but perfectly identical from 1944 to 1953... and thus until his death in 1978, since he never published the least retraction on this point.

THE APPARITIONS OF 1917 AND THE MIRACLE OF THE SUN. First of all, Father Dhanis professes to recognize as authentic the apparitions of 1917. He affirms it, without enthusiasm: «The visions of Our Lady which the three little shepherds claim to have had in 1917 indeed seem (sic) to have come from a supernatural intervention.»⁷³⁹ Likewise, he sees a true miracle in the solar phenomenon of October 13: «This miracle rests on solid testimonies and it is reasonable to see in it a miraculous sign.»⁷⁴⁰ This does not prevent him from quibbling over the grave discrepancies he claims to uncover between the various testimonies. The events must, he suggests, have been amplified and unduly

enlarged later on. Thus, he takes exception to all statements of the following nature: «In a zigzag motion, the sun criss-crosses the skies, and everybody has the impression that it is about to throw itself down upon the crowd to destroy it.» (Father Jongen) Dhanis thinks that it is affirming too much. Our Jesuit is more subtle: «Be that as it may», he writes, «we have distinguished on the one hand the phenomenon of the descent of the sun and its going back up in a zigzag, which we have not dared to accept, and on the other hand the phenomenon of the tremors and beginning of the fall, which we have admitted.»⁷⁴¹

All this useless quibbling – in which, moreover, he is mistaken due to lack of information – allows him to greatly minimize the importance and consequences of the prodigious miracle: «If we accept as a probable opinion that the miracle of the sun happened almost exactly as we have described it, must it be considered a divine sign, a miracle?»⁷⁴² Father Dhanis leans to the affirmative. Yet he concludes in the most curious manner: «The most probable solution is to consider this miracle rather as a sign given to men by a supernatural power.... It is important that this miracle, promised as a confirmation of the divine origin of the apparitions, should really in fact guarantee them. Such a guarantee is useful because it is not clear how the visions of Fatima would of themselves indicate their divine origin. *The signs favourable to the apparitions are not decisive* (So then, the great miracle of the sun is not sufficient?); *in opposition to them one can put forward unfavourable signs* not found in recent authors.» (Galamba, Barthas, da Fonseca.)⁷⁴³ Father Dhanis then presents an almost exhaustive catalogue of all the difficulties raised by the Message of Fatima.

FATIMA I AND FATIMA II

He bases all his objections on the very important fact that we stressed in the introduction: the growth of the message that took place later on. Why did Lucy wait until 1936 to begin speaking of the apparitions of the angel dating from 1916, he asks?⁷⁴⁴ Above all, why did the essential theme of the Immaculate Heart of Mary appear so late in the history of Fatima? Neither the great work of Formigao, *The Wonders of Fatima*, nor even the first editions of Father da Fonseca's book make any allusion to it. «It seems», he concludes, «that this theme is part of what we can call “the new history of Fatima”, which uses recent accounts of Lucy.»⁷⁴⁵

The thesis of Dhanis is clear: there are in fact two different histories of Fatima,

the “old” one which went up to the years 1938-40, and the “new” one, which was written from more recent accounts written by Sister Lucy from 1935 to 1941. We can call these two histories, so different in inspiration, Fatima I for the “old history”, and Fatima II for the “new history”.⁷⁴⁶

The stakes involved in the debate are obvious, since the new elements concern not only the apparitions of the angel, but above all the very text of the great secret, and all the themes which constitute it. The whole basis of the critical edifice of Father Dhanis, of «the general solution of the problem of Fatima» that he proposes, rests on this dichotomy, henceforth affirmed as certain, between Fatima I and Fatima II.

THE MEMOIRS OF SISTER LUCY. To admit such a radical distinction almost necessarily casts a grave suspicion on Fatima II and on its unique source: the *Memoirs* of Sister Lucy. «These are moving accounts, and charm the reader with the innocence, piety and heroism of these little privileged ones of the Holy Virgin.»⁷⁴⁷ He also notes: These accounts have made it possible to write «an intimate history of the little seers, full of freshness and piety».⁷⁴⁸ One senses, however, that conviction is absent, or rather one quickly realizes that these are “poisoned” compliments, for Dhanis deliberately denies them any value as historical witnesses: «All things considered, it is not easy to say precisely how much credence can be given to the accounts of Lucy... one may judge it prudent to use her writings only with circumspection.»⁷⁴⁹ In other words, they are pious imaginings. Why?

THE OBJECTIONS AGAINST FATIMA II

AN IMPOSSIBLE SILENCE. The principal argument advanced by Dhanis, and repeated by his followers, is that so long a silence was impossible for such young children. Dhanis develops this argument in relation to the apparitions of the Angel in 1916, concerning which the children said nothing. The words of Lucy, explaining that the very strong impression of recollection and physical prostration which the apparitions provoked in them moved them very powerfully to silence, does not convince Dhanis. «Is this explanation valid for more than a passing silence? We cannot see how it would make really plausible a silence whose burden the children would carry through the years, which they did not break even when Francisco asked, in vain, to receive First Communion as viaticum, or when little Jacinta, so spontaneous in character, approached the time

of her First Communion.»⁷⁵⁰

Psychologically this silence is inexplicable. The objection applies also to all the themes kept secret from 1917 to 1935 or 1941. Such an absolute silence of almost twenty years or more seems quite suspicious to Father Dhanis.

CONTRADICTIONS AND ERRORS. Moreover, Father Dhanis claims to discover an additional proof that the elements of the “new history” were in fact invented much later on and do not correspond to the original events, in the contradictions between the two versions. According to Fatima I, the secret would have been revealed in June, but in Fatima II, in July. According to the interrogations of 1917, the Virgin did not give Her name until October 13. In the great secret, She already says on July 13: «My Immaculate Heart will triumph.» Dhanis concludes: «It must be admitted that the new history of Fatima does not harmonize well with the old one, which is rather disturbing.»⁷⁵¹ All the more so since there are other motives for suspicion. The new version of the Message, according to Dhanis, is riddled with grave theological errors.

They concern first of all one of the prayers taught by the Angel to the three shepherds in 1916. The theology which it implies does not suit the taste of our author. We will respond carefully to the objection while commenting on the Message. Here the censor of Fatima highlights his condescending leniency: «One will note that our judgement on this formula was not severe. We called it neither heretical nor false, but inexact.»⁷⁵² In fact, the objection against this prayer is so inconsistent that we find quite similar expressions in many of the writings of the saints, Gertrude the Great for example. It is perfectly justified even in its literal sense. But no matter, for Dhanis’ judgement still falls immediately, and without appeal: «This however is enough to make it difficult to grant it the heavenly origin that Lucy attributes to it...»⁷⁵³

The vision of hell that Lucy reports she had with Jacinta and Francisco on July 13, 1917, also raises serious theological difficulties. Apart from the fact that it appears only in the “new history”, it is impossible for Dhanis to take it literally. Father da Fonseca sums up perfectly the conclusion that every sensible reader inevitably draws from the long development of Father Dhanis, which as always is a succession of rash hypotheses that undermine the authenticity of the apparitions, and soothing circumlocutions, which hypothetically are very favourable. Dhanis continues: «The other difficulties concern principally the exaggeratedly medieval representation of the pains of hell, and the critic asks

how Our Lady could present it this way to the twentieth century.»⁷⁵⁴ Father da Fonseca is content to give, in response, the reference to some texts... of the Gospel and the Apocalypse in perfect accord with the vision of Fatima. That alone is sufficient, but we will come back to this point.

DOUBTFUL PROPHECIES? Along with miracles, true prophecies are always the most unquestionable mark of the supernatural. There are several prophecies in the famous secret of Fatima of July 13, 1917. Thus it announces the horrors of the Second World War if mankind did not convert in time. But Father Dhanis stresses, ironically, that the famous prophecy was not divulged until 1942! He makes the same incisive remark regarding the famous “night illumined by an unknown light”, presented as the herald of the divine chastisement. In short, our Jesuit insinuates, are not the prophecies of Sister Lucy simply a case of prophecies too easily made, *post eventum*? Or in any case the inventions of the seer? This explanation allows him to assume some very curious historical errors: did not Sister Lucy predict, remarks Dhanis, that the war would begin “during the reign of Pius XI”? Yet we know that the Pontiff died on February 10, 1939, several months before the declaration of war, which only took place under Pius XII!

A GROSS HISTORICO-THEOLOGICAL ERROR? The gravest error, in the eyes of Dhanis, touches on one of the essential themes of the secret: *The role which the Virgin attributes to Russia and the impossible remedy proposed*. According to Lucy, the Holy Virgin requested in the Secret that the Pope consecrate Russia to Her Immaculate Heart. Dhanis alleges that such a request could not be fulfilled, saying: «There is no need for long reflections to see that it was practically impossible for the Sovereign Pontiff to make such a consecration.» Our critic concludes that strictly speaking, it was not absolutely impossible. «But in the concrete, things appear more difficult. Schismatic as a religious unity, and Marxist as a political unity, Russia could not be consecrated by the Pope, without this act taking on the air of a challenge, both in regard to the separated hierarchy, as well as to the Union of Soviet Republics. *This would make the consecration practically unrealizable.*» Since such an impolitic and anti-ecumenical request was «morally impossible by reason of the reactions it would normally provoke», how could it come from Heaven, Dhanis asks, and his question, in spite of its attenuated form, leaves no doubt as to its answer: «But could the Most Holy Virgin have requested a consecration which, taken according to the rigour of the terms, would be practically unrealizable?... This question indeed seems to call for a negative response.»⁷⁵⁵

One can guess what conclusion Father Dhanis is able to draw from such a series of “unfavourable indicators”.

LUCY IS NOT A CREDIBLE WITNESS

ONE WITNESS IS TOO FEW! First of all, Father Dhanis insists that on all the disputed facts Lucy is the only witness, and twenty years later at that. Francisco and Jacinta died in 1919 and 1920, without ever having said a single word about all that. Thus, all these accounts laden with the supernatural, all these disconcerting politico-religious revelations of “Fatima II” rest on just a single witness. Dhanis points this out in regard to the apparitions of the Angel: «Let us admit that, to hold with certitude to such extraordinary things, one would desire not to be dependent on only one witness, even an authoritative one.»⁷⁵⁶ In short, *testis unus, testis nullus*: one witness is no witness at all – especially since according to Dhanis the testimony in question is very much open to doubt.

“THE INSPIRATION OF LUCY”. Lucy writes in her *Memoirs*: «It seems to me, Your Excellency, that in similar cases, I do not say or write anything of myself. I must give thanks to God for the assistance of the Holy Spirit which, I sense, suggests to me what I should write or say.» Dhanis comments: «The validity of such an impression remains almost hopelessly subject to caution... in many cases, the feeling of writing under a supernatural inspiration is certainly illusory.» In a footnote he then cites the famous text where Nietzsche relates the extremely vivid impression he had that he too was writing “under inspiration”. So it was an illusion! An illusion which was to have regrettable consequences: «We have observed», notes Dhanis, «that if a writer feels himself inspired, that does not seem to cause him to exercise very strict control over his use of the memory...»⁷⁵⁷ And he easily suggests that the remark applies to Sister Lucy, in whom he denounces the extreme assurance she had of herself, as well as the numerous inexactitudes, incoherent statements and flagrant errors he claims are found in her writings.

CONCLUSION: LUCY DREAMED IT UP. «All things considered», concludes Dhanis, «it is not easy to state precisely what degree of credence is to be given to the accounts of Sister Lucy. Without questioning her sincerity, or the sound judgement she shows in daily life, one may judge it prudent to use her writings only with reservations.» Thus it is a question neither of a lie, nor an imposture, but an unconscious fabrication. «Let us observe also that a person can be sincere

and prove to have good judgement in everyday life, but have a propensity for unconscious fabrication in a certain area, or in any case, a tendency to relate old memories of twenty years ago with embellishments and considerable modifications.»⁷⁵⁸ There it is, Father Dhanis has written the two words which sum up his whole thesis: “*unconscious fabrication*”. It is equivalent to saying that she «modified, idealized, embellished her memories». What he had spoken about in general terms since the introduction, Dhanis attributes quite evidently to Sister Lucy: «Sometimes the deformation can be so strong that one will speak of a more or less pathological case...» He also cites long passages from the treatise on mystical theology by Poulain: «Certain minds invent stories and persuade themselves that these things really took place. In their imagination, they are in good faith..., etc.»⁷⁵⁹

In this way, Dhanis would have us believe, Lucy *imagined* the apparitions of the Angel: «One cannot dare to absolutely discard the hypothesis of an account due in large part to the imagination, and one feels obliged not to take a position.»⁷⁶⁰

THE SECRET CONTESTED

In this way Father Dhanis believes he has found a satisfactory solution to the only question really preoccupying him, *the authenticity of the secret*. If Lucy invented it, then this secret, so vexing and irritating to modern theologians, loses its whole value. That goes without saying. To undermine the secret’s impact entirely, Dhanis finds a simple explanation, apparently wise and moderate, exempt from all passion. «Nevertheless we will not suppose that Lucy invented in this way the whole text of the secret, in her written version.» No, Dhanis affirms unceasingly that he believes in the perfect sincerity of Lucy and her good sense in everyday life. Here is the elegant solution that reconciles everything: the good faith of the seer, even her sanctity if you insist, with an invention of the imagination: there was *an enrichment, an amplification of an objective original kernel*. «We are led to believe then, that in the course of years, certain exterior events and certain spiritual experiences of Lucy enriched the original content of the secret, but we shall maintain also that the later version of the secret is still really *an echo of the mysterious words* confided to the little shepherds of Fatima.»⁷⁶¹ «The text of the message (he is speaking of the secret) has conserved a kernel which corresponds to the words heard in 1917», but «a “shell” of later elements has formed around it.» Our critic now believes he has found his «general solution to the problem of Fatima». He will even go so far as to

suggest, for each of the great themes of the secret, an explanation which accounts for their genesis in the mind of Lucy. Let us follow our critic in this audacious reconstruction.

HOW LUCY ELABORATED THE TEXT OF THE SECRET

THE VISION OF HELL. After the uncritical exposition of the supposed objections against this vision, presumed too archaic and medieval, Dhanis formulates a question: «... Will we not have to conclude also that the vision of hell related by Sister Lucy cannot have a supernatural origin?» Our Jesuit is careful not to answer in the affirmative! «This would be too hasty a conclusion.»⁷⁶² Then, was the vision authentic and did it have a real, important significance? No again! Dhanis proposes two solutions: «The vision of hell corresponds to the idea that the children had.» In this case, did they invent it, purely and simply? No! Dhanis does not have the audacity to say that. The second solution completes the first: «The seers received a very intense knowledge of the horror of sin and damnation, and little by little this knowledge evoked a vision in their imagination.»⁷⁶³ Dhanis says that it was an intimate, inexpressible experience, which the children clumsily described according to the medieval ideas received from the catechism. For our part, he concludes, we must use our intelligence and not take their words literally; a whole process of interpretation must be done.

THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY. The theme of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was, according to Dhanis, also the fruit of a slow psychological elaboration, the later fruit of a long inner maturing of an initial perception that was much simpler and more mysterious. Here, the determining element was the influence of other “apparitions”. «If we consider once again some more or less recent additions introduced into the secret, one is led to consider attentively a vision that Lucy had when she was still a postulant with the Dorothean Sisters.»⁷⁶⁴ Thus the Secret was “enriched” with the theme of the Immaculate Heart of Mary through the «infiltration of certain elements coming from the visions of 1925-26», at Pontevedra...

The trouble is that elsewhere Dhanis contests the supernatural character of these apparitions. «On the one hand, the moral and practical qualities that the witnesses of the life of Lucy attribute to her are a favourable sign, but not decisive. For on the other hand, we become rather suspicious when we see the

striking resemblance between the “great promise” that Lucy has transmitted and the “great promise” made by St. Margaret Mary: *the knowledge of the old promise could thus become the psychological origin of the new one.*» Here we see Lucy accused quite simply... of common plagiarism! Undoubtedly it is unconscious because Dhanis, of course, never calls into question the sincerity of Lucy! The important part is the conclusion, which undermines the essence of the secret, and the whole message of Fatima: the revelation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, its requests, and its promises. «Our readers will undoubtedly be disappointed to see that, in the secret of Fatima, the theme of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is not presented in such a way that all doubts on its celestial origin disappear. We dare to hope that in spite of their disappointment, which is ours as well (sic!), they will be grateful to us for not having deviated from the sincerity which we owe to them, and to the religious subject that we are treating.»⁷⁶⁵

Thus Dhanis has us witness the progressive elaboration of the secret in the mind of Lucy. The essential theme is due to the influence of later visions that she had – or believes she had, for no doubt she received strong suggestions from the writings of St. Margaret Mary. «The Secret of Fatima seems to have undergone considerable additions», Dhanis continues. This is still saying too little, for other factors entered in, he explains, which perfectly explain all the other “new themes”.

THE PROPHECY OF THE WAR. After announcing that the First World War would end soon, the text of the secret goes on: «If men do not cease offending God, another worse one will break out in the reign of Pius XI.» Is it truly Our Lady who pronounced these words on July 13, 1917? Dhanis does not believe so: «The mention of Pius XI, because of its extreme precision... seems to us rather to be an exception in the prophetic literary genre, and it seems plausible that it replaced a primitive expression where the Pope was not designated by name... Indeed it seems that the expression, “under the next pontificate”, would fit better than the words, “under the pontificate of Pius XI”.»⁷⁶⁶ It is Lucy herself who, while Pius XI was reigning, supposedly made «this shift from the first expression to the second».

“THE NIGHT ILLUMINED BY AN UNKNOWN LIGHT.” Nor is Dhanis naive enough to believe that it was the Virgin Herself who foretold “the night illumined by an unknown light” as «the great sign» of the approaching war. He gives a much more rational hypothesis: *It is after having seen the aurora borealis of January 25, 1938, that Lucy integrated it under the prophetic form*

into the text of the secret. Of course our Jesuit, who always tiptoes carefully about his conclusions, does not say it so crudely. We do not have enough room to cite *in extenso* the choice morsel by which he comes, little by little – and with what subtlety – to formulate his true hypothesis: «Before the rare and mysterious phenomena of nature, simple people often experience presentiments of great calamities.» It is “a natural impression”. «It could be passed over if there were no other indications of the influence of certain recent events on the writing down of the secret», but there are others. Thus, «would it then be bold to ask if perhaps (what circumlocutions!) the natural impressions of Lucy (who everybody knows is one of these simple persons...) before the aurora borealis were not integrated into the secret, if they did not introduce the words on the unknown light, as the herald of the great chastisement?» What a sentence! Read it over! It is phrased so as not to state what he clearly wants to say, namely: Lucy attributed to the Blessed Virgin of 1917 her own impressions of 1938... Dhanis imputes without any proof the undue transfer to “natural impressions...” In any case Dhanis comes to this conclusion: «The announcement of the aurora borealis in the secret is grounds for suspicion.»⁷⁶⁷

RUSSIA, THE SCOURGE OF GOD. There remain the most shocking, and scandalous, words of the secret: those which concern Soviet Russia. Is it possible that the Blessed Virgin Herself uttered them, in 1917? Surely not! She could not have asked for a “practically unrealizable consecration”. Nor could she have accused Russia of being behind the Second World War, as the text of the secret written down in 1941 seems to affirm.⁷⁶⁸ What then is the explanation? Once again it is *exterior events* which have impressed the seer and led her to integrate into the prophetic form, emotional shocks received recently, attributing them to Our Lady in 1917. In this case, Dhanis suggests, it was the Spanish Civil War and frantic fear of communism resulting from it, which explains this whole aspect of the secret. «The hardly objective fashion in which the provocation of the war is described in the secret is best explained by the influence the Spanish Civil War had on Lucy’s way of thinking.»⁷⁶⁹ A disciple of Dhanis, Father Martindale, develops his thought explicitly, maintaining that Lucy undoubtedly «personalized the ideas of the primitive message, making “evil” in general a concrete incarnation in Soviet Russia, and converting the maternal love of the Virgin into the “Heart of Mary”.»⁷⁷⁰

A TRIPLE CONCLUSION

The thesis of Father Dhanis, which seeks above all to reject the authenticity of the secret, can be summed up in three points, which are indissolubly connected with each other.

1. THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN FATIMA I AND FATIMA II. «There exists a dichotomy, a real opposition between the primitive, or “old” history of Fatima, and the more recent, or “new” history»⁷⁷¹, beginning with the Memoirs of Lucy.

2. FATIMA II IS THE FRUIT OF A FABRICATION. From 1944 until May 16, 1953, when he published his last article on the question in the *Civiltà Cattolica*, Father Dhanis did not cease to veil and camouflage more and more his attacks on Fatima, to the point where, if we read only his last article, so confused and muddled, one would be totally mistaken on his true thought. Nor does his study published in June, 1952, in the *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, give any more exact an idea of his thought. Therefore, to understand him one must go back to his texts of 1944-45, fundamental texts, of which he never agreed to retract the least line. There, in spite of the evasive style that he never departed from, his judgement on Fatima II comes out clearly.

Here is this text, which is little known, but of capital importance:⁷⁷² «The new history of Fatima, which rests on the accounts of Lucy, calls for *more reserve*. One may fear, without denying the sound judgement or sincerity of the seer, that *certain fictitious elements* slipped into the accounts. *The apparitions of the Angel* and the miraculous communion he is supposed to have given the children remain *uncertain*. *The secret*, recently published, presents a rather complex situation (sic). Its existence is known since 1917, and what the children very vaguely hinted about its contents corresponds to the text now published. Yet several points present real difficulties. *The description of hell* may correspond to a *symbolic* vision given to the children. The messages of Our Lady, however, bear *the traces of different additions*. Thus, it hardly seems probable that Our Lady asked for *the consecration of Russia* or that She attributed *the provocation of the present war* exclusively to the atheistic propaganda of this country. The announcement of *the aurora borealis* provokes a certain suspicion; and *the new theme of the Immaculate Heart of Mary* is not presented in very reassuring circumstances, etc.»

Apart from the two or three prudent concessions, and some attenuations which express doubts about the secret rather than outright negation (compensated by previous texts with affirmations of the contrary), there remains nothing, nothing

at all, of the great message of Fatima. Reread the secret phrase by phrase, and not one has escaped from the corrosive criticism of Father Dhanis.

Was then our Jesuit a relentless enemy of Fatima? He did not wish to be considered so, and he feared above all that the hierarchy would accuse him of being one. Thus he was careful to defend himself... Moreover he believed himself perfectly protected from such an accusation, for did he not profess to accept “all the essentials” of the message of Fatima? This is the third affirmation of his thesis.

3. FATIMA I REMAINS AUTHENTIC. Yes, explains Dhanis, one can very well dissociate in the events and message of Fatima, the primitive, authentic kernel from everything that the imagination of the seer added later on: «Let the reader beware then of an exaggerated suspicion. These strong doubts attached to the apparitions of the Angel (and the secret) should not lead them to call into question the *essential elements of the miracle of Fatima*. For what are we presented with? On the one hand, we find accounts not easily believable in writings based on memories twenty years old. On the other hand, we find ourselves faced with facts which are well known from the beginning, which appear to be confirmed as supernatural by a great divine sign, facts which enjoy an ecclesiastical approval, and which became the source of a large torrent of graces. *There is not sufficient reason to place these facts in the same category as the above-mentioned accounts.*»⁷⁷³ «All this”, writes Dhanis in his general conclusion, «has to do with what we call the old history of Fatima. This has its shadows too, but the light definitely prevails.»⁷⁷⁴ The final conclusion that imposes itself is that it is better to stick with Fatima I... and no longer speak of the rest!

II. AN INCOHERENT SOLUTION

In spite of its appearances of prudence and wise moderation, is the solution of Father Dhanis tenable? Can we, at the same time, profess to accept Fatima I, that is, recognize the authenticity of the apparitions and miracles of 1917, and reject all of Fatima II as an artificial and spurious message?

The answer to this question calls for a twofold examination. The first would lead us to examine whether all the criticisms of Father Dhanis are solidly founded. To avoid tiresome repetitions, we will examine this question later on.⁷⁷⁵

Nevertheless it is interesting, even before going into the maze of his objections and the responses – for let us say at the outset that there is not one of his criticisms which does not have a satisfactory refutation⁷⁷⁶ – it is very interesting to judge the thesis of Father Dhanis *simply from the point of view of its coherence*. Is his in-between position, which pretends to stop half-way between the radical unbelief of the rationalists and complete acceptance of the supernatural origin of the facts, sustainable? We shall see that it is not. This twofold judgement, positive for the first half of the facts (Fatima I), and negative for the second half (Fatima II), is unjustifiable both from the point of view of *Catholic theology* and *historical criticism*. This is what we shall demonstrate in this chapter: No, Fatima cannot lend itself to two evaluations so contrary to each other. It is impossible to say: “It is half true, half false!”

1. THE VIEWPOINT OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY: A MODERNIST THESIS

Is it possible, solely by the light of Catholic faith, to accept Fatima I while rejecting Fatima II? The question is simple. It is a question of what is fitting on the supernatural level, and the answer depends above all on the conception we have of God and His Providence.

THE TRUTH OF FATIMA I. On the apparitions of 1917, we are in accord: they are authentic. But what does that mean? God chose the three little shepherds, Lucy, Jacinta, and Francisco to make them witnesses of the apparitions of His Holy Mother at the Cova da Iria. Among all men, they were chosen by Him to see Her, to hear Her and faithfully transmit Her words. As a striking guarantee of the veracity of their witness, God multiplied the supernatural, physical, and even cosmic prodigies: there were stupefying conversions, sudden healings which were inexplicable by natural causes, and from June 13 to October 13, incomparable cosmic miracles, seen and verified by hundreds, and then thousands of persons... marvels culminating in the unheard of prodigy of the great miracle of the sun, contemplated by seventy thousand witnesses seized with fright, or transported with holy joy. For three months, the seers had foretold it, specifying the day and the hour, and making it clear that Our Lady would accomplish it so that all might believe in Her word. All this is quite clear, and Father Dhanis professes to accept it along with us.⁷⁷⁷ For to write that one believes in the supernatural origin of the apparitions is to say all this, or to say nothing at all!

BUT LATER ON... LUCY INVENTED THINGS. Right after these marvellous events, Dhanis continues, and this is the negative part of his «general solution of the problem of Fatima», Lucy, who had in her temperament a regrettable propensity for «unconsciously inventing things», set about embellishing the initial supernatural events, inventing things and adding to them, and through sheer imagination or under the pressure of exterior events made up a whole immense message, quite new and of capital importance... which, since she is acting in all sincerity and good faith, she will without any scruple present as the very words Our Lady pronounced on July 13, 1917! All this we have already set out in detail. In short, although Lucy was always sincere and possesses a real talent for writing «moving accounts full of charm, innocence and piety», she does not enjoy perfect mental equilibrium.⁷⁷⁸ She invented things, and distorted the true apparitions of 1917. That is what Father Dhanis holds as a plausible thesis, fully satisfactory to the eyes of faith.

A SOLUTION WHICH IS INJURIOUS TO GOD

In the light of true theology, that is, the supernatural knowledge that we have of God through faith, we must say that the thesis of Dhanis is unthinkable, unjustifiable, and even scandalous. A God who would have willed or simply permitted all this is perhaps the God of the vilest among the casuists, or perhaps the bizarre God of the modernists. But this God who would guarantee, by such great miracles, the word of an unbalanced seer, prone to fantasies and unworthy of faith, has nothing in common with the veracious God of biblical revelation, with Jesus, “the faithful witness” who came to bear witness to the truth; and still less does He have anything in common with the God of Catholic dogma! For God would be lying if by these miracles he induced the crowd of witnesses, and the hierarchy right up to the Pope, to believe the word of unworthy witnesses. For the honour of God, it would be better to say with a Gerard de Sede that all of Fatima is simply a fraud, a vast exercise in deception, a scheme of the priests... For although men can be hypocrites, followers of their own interests, and liars, God Himself does not lie! This obvious truth seems to have escaped Father Dhanis and his followers.

AN UNTHINKABLE CRIME. In the eyes of faith, the two contrary judgements on Fatima I and Fatima II are irreconcilable. *We can say a priori that if all the miracles attested are true miracles*, that is, as Dhanis himself explains, «divine signs, authenticating the apparitions»,⁷⁷⁹ *it is impossible that Lucy, the principal*

witness, have so little credibility. God could not have permitted that she then spread within the Church, with impunity, a new history of Fatima which is radically false and entirely of her own invention. It is impossible that at the very moment when the Bishop of Fatima, on October 13, 1930, officially recognized the authenticity of the apparitions of Fatima, the seer had already lost her mind several years before and would bother her confessors, and soon the whole world, with fraudulent messages. It is impossible that a false secret, which was simply the fruit of her diseased imagination, deceive thousands of the faithful with the blessing of Pius XII, who published it in 1942, and made known his approval on many occasions... And all this because of the spectacular miracles which took place according to the words of the three seers in 1917. *If Lucy deceived the world for half a century, it is God Himself who is first of all responsible.* For how could He have tolerated such a dereliction on the part of the witness He chose for Himself, and let such a scandal happen? Without giving to His Church any clear sign of the lapse and betrayal of His messenger? After having backed up her words with miracles, He permitted her to deceive the Church – and to what a degree – without showing any sign, either natural or supernatural, in all clarity, that she had betrayed her function? This is impossible.

HOW GOD GUARANTEES THE VERACITY OF HIS WITNESSES. When God has a great mission to be accomplished in history that involves special charisms, He is wise and powerful enough to choose and prepare for Himself adequate instruments, and without doing violence to their liberty, He gives them the gift of fulfilling by His grace the essential mission to which He has destined them from all eternity. This does not mean that He must render them infallible in all domains or impeccable in their whole life. In the very exercise of their mission, He sometimes allows them to show *some secondary shortcomings*: for the transmission of a Heavenly message, some passing forgetfulness, or a very minor error on some date or detail. In this He leaves them to their human powers, especially when it concerns statements that can be verified perfectly well by other witnesses. Thus Lucy erroneously thought that Our Lady appeared on August 15, after the return from Vila Nova de Ourem, when in reality it was on the 19th. But in similar questions of fact, clearly there is nothing which allows us to call into question the solidity and fidelity of the testimony of the seers.

SOME QUESTIONABLE PRECEDENTS. Granted, Father Dhanis is relying on the authority of Poulain's scholarly treatise on mystical theology in invoking some precedents: certain saints themselves, he says, have been mistaken in

relating and commenting on some of their visions, «The authentic supernatural», writes Dhanis, «can very well be found with the counterfeit... It can happen that in a given case one may hold as supernatural certain revelations, while others related to it appear suspect or are clearly false. From this point of view, the saints themselves were not always exempt from all error...»⁷⁸⁰ *A fortiori* Sister Lucy!

This general affirmation does not impress us. In fact, if one goes back to the text, the long exposition of Poulain, which cites haphazardly St. Bridget and Catherine Emmerich, St. Catherine of Siena and Mary of Agreda, St. Vincent Ferrer and the Venerable Holzhauser... is not fully convincing.⁷⁸¹ Each case would have to be carefully examined, taking into consideration the degrees of authority of the persons invoked, which are so diverse, and the particular type of revelation under consideration. Although it is undoubtedly not absolutely impossible that such or such a saint distorted or related in an ambiguous manner some revelation or supernatural light that he received, *not all apparitions are to be put on the same level and the possibility of error is not equal in every case.*

REVELATION, PRIVATE REVELATIONS AND PUBLIC REVELATIONS.

There is a custom of confusing all revelations, and placing them in the category of “private revelations”, to distinguish them from the primary, essential and sufficient Revelation: the total Revelation accomplished in Jesus Christ and closed on the death of the last of the Apostles, who passed it on to us infallibly. This being quite clear, we can add that not all subsequent revelations are identical among themselves: «What we must revise in the classical vocabulary», R. Laurentin justly notes in a study on *The Status and Function of Apparitions*, «is the designation of all subsequent revelations as “private revelations”. In fact, some of them are private, but some of them are public. The revelations of St. Bridget or the message of Lourdes were destined for a very large audience. One should therefore speak of *particular* revelations, some of them *private* (for example the three secrets St. Bernadette received for herself alone, and which did not concern anyone else); and others *public*, such as the twelve words which constitute the message of Lourdes.»⁷⁸² Although there are apparitions which are destined first of all and principally for the personal sanctification of the beneficiary, there are others whose primary end is directly apostolic or ecclesial, through the transmission of a public message, the foundation of a great pilgrimage or the accomplishment of an extraordinary mission such as that of Joan of Arc, always for the good of souls and the realization of a great providential design.

AUTHENTIC “PUBLIC REVELATION” EXCLUDES INVENTIONS. This distinction is illuminating: Is it then possible that saints whose mission involved a special charism were deceived precisely on the very object of their providential vocation? Would Joan of Arc be a saint if she admitted that she completely invented the heavenly voices that told her to “boot the English out of France”, to deliver Orleans and have the Dauphin anointed at Rheims, she who murmured even to her executioner: “No, my voices have not deceived me!” Would St. Margaret Mary be an authentic saint if she had imagined, by unconscious autosuggestion, and after reading the works of St. Mechtilde or St. Gertrude, all her supposed apparitions of the Sacred Heart (the schema of Dhanis can easily apply to all known revelations!), thus deceiving the Catholic world who believed her and the Pope who canonized her? And St. Catherine Labouré? And St. Bernadette if she imagined the apparitions of Lourdes? And St. Therese of the Child Jesus if the Virgin Mary did not really smile to her? The question is absurd for a Catholic theologian!

Of course we know that sanctity never consists, by its nature, in extraordinary gifts, miracles, visions or revelations, but resides entirely in the heroic practice of charity and the other virtues. But it is no less certain that *true sanctity can never be found with illusion or fabrication*, and still less with a deceitfulness which would be the cause of an immense and lasting scandal for the whole Church.

In short, it is untenable to say that Lucy could, in all sincerity and good faith, totally distort through unconscious fabrication, an authentic message received from Heaven, to be transmitted to the whole Church.

THE MISERABLE DEFENCE OF FATHER DHANIS

So obvious is the incoherence of Father Dhanis’ thesis that he judged it necessary to answer the objection himself. Once again we must quote here the important conclusion of his study, while adding our comments.⁷⁸³ «There might perhaps be a tendency to reproach our solution with being *insufficiently coherent*. The invention, however innocent it might be, that we attribute to Lucy cannot be presumed, it is said, in a confidante of Our Lady. The whole history of Fatima is therefore compromised by accepting such an invention.» Such is quite exactly the decisive objection that we propose when faced with the whole critique of Father Dhanis. Hence his answers have the highest significance for

us.

«We avow», he continues, «that the inventions in the accounts of Lucy are not precisely a recommendation for the apparitions of Fatima.» Note well: for once our critic, who is always dissimulating, does not camouflage his true thought. He will have his hands full defending himself later on: «I never said», «I did not mean to say», «It was a simple hypothesis»..., here, the accusation is clear, denuded of any oratorical precautions. The crafty equivocations of his second article⁷⁸⁴ shall no longer fool us.

«But let us repeat what we have already said: (the inventions of Lucy) are not a sufficient reason to reject the authenticity of the intervention of Mary.» It is this affirmation that we have denounced as untenable. By what arguments would our theologian justify it? Here they are:

1. THE UNFATHOMABLE DIVINE WISDOM. «Must we recall that the ways of God are not our ways, and that in governing God takes account of many things that escape us, and thus it is very risky to judge, according to our limited wisdom, what choice he should make?» God can very well choose as a witness a child of no great mental stability, prone to fabrications... For His designs are unfathomable, and His wisdom is not ours. That line of reasoning is bewildering, at the very least! In His divine wisdom, Christ seems to have acted quite otherwise in the choice of Peter and the Apostles.

2. THE FATAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE APPARITIONS. «We can however add here other, more precise considerations.» How fortunate! «It must be remarked all the same that the visions of 1917, along with everything that preceded and followed them, were no small shock or insignificant trial for the psychology of a child. Would many children have been able to undergo what Lucy did, without suffering more or less fatal repercussions? If not, then the objection that Heaven could not have chosen Lucy loses most of its force.» Let us make sure we understand: if Lucy made things up after 1917, it is because of the shock of the apparitions and their aftermath. She could not bear the “trial”; the “repercussions” were fatal to her. But few children, adds Dhanis with condescending kindness, were capable of bearing the same “shock”. Thus, God could not have acted otherwise.

Do we really have to point out the presumptuousness of this idea? Was not God, in this case, wise enough to understand that instead of choosing a child, unsuited

by nature to the mission He wished to confer on her, He should have addressed Himself to a wise and level-headed adult? Why not to Father Dhanis?

Dhanis' answer to the objection is grotesque. If Our Lady at Lourdes, at Pontmain, at Fatima, chose children for witnesses, it was because of their greater purity, but also because of the unimpeachable, irrefutable character of their testimony. The "repercussions" of the apparitions were not "fatal" for any of the children, who were chosen precisely for their natural calm and equilibrium. Dhanis cannot give the slightest indication that there were any fatal repercussions for Lucy.

3. PIETY IS BETTER THAN GOOD SENSE. Dhanis continues: «On the other hand, we must admit in Lucy, from what we know of her, an elevated spiritual life and profound piety. Compared with that, certain psychological defects were no doubt of little importance in the eyes of God.» Let us consider once more the insult, the gratuitous calumny dealt out to Lucy: she is stupid and inclined to make up stories, but pious, and that is enough for God to have chosen her as His messenger. What an insult to God, as well! Was He then incapable of finding, of creating and preparing for Himself just one child who would be, at the same time, endowed with a profound piety and perfectly sound in mind?

The arguments of our theologian, a future expert at the Council, lead us from one degree of stupefaction to another. Let us go on to the last one.

4. A PROVIDENTIAL FABRICATION. To quote Father Dhanis again: «Moreover, the obscure points in the history of Fatima can also result in good consequences, and precisely for that reason have found a place in the dispositions of God.» What does that mean? That God willed "the obscure points" of Fatima, in other words, the fabrication of Sister Lucy, to draw "good consequences" from this evil.

Dhanis continues: «We must find the principal reasons for consecrating ourselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, on the one hand in the spiritual value of this consecration, and on the other in the appeal of the representative of Christ. The invitation made by a particular revelation should only influence us secondarily. But would not a good number of the faithful, drawn by extraordinary events, have a tendency to judge otherwise? There, however, one would depart from Catholic good sense.» In other words, the too extraordinary apparitions of 1917, with their spectacular miracles, presented in themselves... a

grave peril for the faithful: the danger of tainting their purity of intention! Dear God! What a twisted mind our Jesuit manifests and what tortuous procedures he attributes to You! For here is his grand conclusion:

«The obscure points that accompany the message of Fatima can help our weakness to avoid this deviation. If then we are careful to retain the exact sense of the order of motives that must guide our piety, the conclusions of our study will, for their part, perhaps render them purer, far from diminishing the fervour of our consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.» There it is, we have finally got it. The cat is out of the bag. God has willed the fabrications of Sister Lucy so that – no doubt thanks to the intelligent denunciations Father Dhanis would make of them – the whole Church would avoid falling into the trap of having too much confidence in a simple private revelation! This is how our author reconstitutes the great design of God... in which he usurps an honourable role.

«Thus, our conclusions (according to which Lucy invented half the message!) open wide the door to devotion to Our Lady of Fatima. It is certain that the pilgrimage of Fatima has become a great source of grace for the Church of Portugal; it indeed seems (sic!) to have originated from a miraculous intervention of the Mother of God; ecclesiastical authority encourages it; what more do we need to venerate Our Lady of Fatima with all our heart?»

In 1952 and again in 1953, Father Dhanis will continue to make similar declarations of intense devotion to Our Lady of Fatima, all the while continuing to accuse Lucy of having invented the Secret and the whole of Fatima II. Is our critic sincere?... In any case, to the extent he is sincere, in making such declarations without ever having retracted the least line of his harshest criticisms, his attitude can only be justified on one hypothesis...

A MODERNIST THESIS

To not be shocked by such incoherent affirmations, one must think and act as a modernist. Indeed from this perspective, the incoherence disappears and the thesis becomes once again plausible, sustainable.

If the content of the faith is not an objective deposit of the intelligible order, but a vague, subjective, ineffable religious sentiment, its verbal expressions will

never be anything more than pale, imperfect symbolical approximations, all dependent on the socio-cultural milieu and the more or less sound mental structure of the subject. For the modernist, it is in the very nature of the religious experience, of which apparitions are only an example, to be continually transfigured, reinvented and more or less distorted by the subject.

It is this fundamentally subjectivist conception of Revelation that Father Dhanis transposes, applying it to the revelation of Fatima. In this way, we will recall, he explains the terrible vision of hell which constitutes the first part of the secret: «The seers received a very intense horror of sins and damnation, and little by little this knowledge evoked a vision in their imagination.»⁷⁸⁵

The interpretation is the same for the rest of the secret. To be sure, there is still an original event which constitutes the kernel of the message divulged later on. But the initial contents underwent such transformations and additions in the mind of the seer that it is practically impossible to find it again in its original purity. And yet, it continues to conserve a certain link with the «mysterious words» confided to the three shepherds in 1917.⁷⁸⁶ Once again, here is an extract from the conclusion of Father Dhanis: «We admit that the text of the message retains a kernel which corresponds to the words heard in 1917; but a “shell” of later elements that formed around it appears considerable to us. It is probable that from the beginning great punishments were announced, and thus quite obviously it deals with a means of salvation against these evils. But an attempt at reconstructing the primitive text would give too uncertain a result. The written version of Lucy remains precious for us (sic!) because, however scrambled it is, it still conserves the *echo* of the blessed words of Mary.»⁷⁸⁷

There we have it! The secret presented by Sister Lucy as the authentic account of the precise and exact words pronounced by Our Lady, is for Dhanis only a faraway echo (and with what distortions) of the “mysterious words” that it is practically impossible to reconstruct, except in a vague and general way. Are we not reminded of some modernist dissecting the text of the Gospel, to explain that the words attributed later on to Our Lord by the Evangelists evidently do not come from Him, but are only the fruit of a symbolic elaboration of their religious experience?

Let us remark only that the modernist explanation is no more acceptable for the message of Fatima than it is for the Gospel. The modernist critic can only distinguish between the authentically revealed initial message and its later

expression, disfigured by errors and later additions, by implicitly appealing to the primitive revelation, known through the source itself... and which he alone understands! The presumption is obvious, and condemns this method, founded as it is on the most arbitrary assumptions.

The conclusion cannot be avoided: However we look at it, the thesis of Father Dhanis cannot be sustained from the point of view of the Catholic faith.

2. THE VIEWPOINT OF SCIENTIFIC CRITICISM: AN ARBITRARY THESIS

To be sure, it is very convenient to dissect at will the message of Fatima, willingly accepting as true whatever has nothing disturbing about it, and unscrupulously rejecting as spurious, or invented later on by the seer, anything upsetting, anything that contradicts the opinions of our own school of thought, ideological prejudices, or political passions... This severe selectivity in the themes of the message, this merciless “pruning” of the words of Our Lady by Father Dhanis, must rest on some solid, objective and incontestable criterion... This is not the case.

We can show that his two part thesis is just as untenable from the viewpoint of historical criticism as from the theological point of view. The flaw is the same: a fundamental incoherence which makes his solution purely arbitrary.

According to Dhanis, as we know, there are two histories of Fatima: the “old history”, which is authentic, and the “new history”, which is a pure invention. Yet, for both the one and the other the principal witness is Lucy. So we must affirm that although Lucy was perfectly reliable in 1917, she was no longer so in 1941, when she wrote down the text of the secret. *A priori* this is possible, but in this case one would have to say why. There lies the difficulty: this implies that one would be able to distinguish between these different testimonies during the course of time, to discern those which are credible from those which are not. Lucy is always sincere, Dhanis tells us, but unconsciously she made things up... The accusation is terrible. And the insoluble problem is in managing to limit the implications without at the same time ruining the authenticity of Fatima I, which he is supposedly safeguarding: thus we must know *how long* she had been inventing things, and demonstrate it in the name of *objective criteria*.

A MAGNIFICENT VICIOUS CIRCLE

If her mental equilibrium had deteriorated, we would still need to have testimonies to prove it, a serious medical diagnostic. Of all this, Father Dhanis does not provide the slightest indication. On this point, all the accounts of those who met Sister Lucy agree: they all admit that she had great common sense and perfect psychological health, to which her letters and various writings also bear witness, as we shall have occasion to see several times.

Dhanis himself does not «call into question the good judgement she shows in everyday life.» However, that is not enough for him. He adds: «A person can be sincere and show good judgement in everyday life, but have a propensity for unconscious fabrication in a certain sector, or in any case have a tendency to relate old memories from twenty years ago with embellishments and considerable modifications.»⁷⁸⁸

The formula that Dhanis applies to Lucy is a beautiful masterpiece of calculated ambiguity. Sister Lucy modified, and enriched her old memories from twenty years before. Very well! That should be easy to verify: her Memoirs are filled with descriptions, little facts, precise recollections of which she was not the only witness. On every page they involve her parents, her brother and sisters, and the inhabitants of Aljustrel. If Lucy were pathologically afflicted with this unfortunate tendency to make things up, the historians and journalists who made their own investigation at the village would have uncovered her flagrant errors long ago. But no, every witness agrees and all recognize that the memory of the seer was uncommon... and exact.

Dhanis himself is well aware of it... he has foreseen the objection: no, Lucy did not make anything up in her ordinary memories, she only invented things «in a certain sector»; in other words: in what concerns the apparitions. And the ruse succeeds! This time the suspicion is irrefutable. After all, she is the only witness of the apparitions.

TOO FACILE A METHOD. Who can fail to notice the enormity of the sophism? Dom Jean-Nesmy points it out very well: «First of all, nobody has ever noticed anything in Lucy's temperament which would denote, *in other areas*, a penchant for mythomania, and still less lying. To pretend that what she says is precisely the proof of this mythomania would be admitting as a proof precisely what has to be proven: in other words, it is a textbook example of reasoning in a vicious

circle, which consequently proves nothing.»⁷⁸⁹ Here Father Dhanis commits an enormous methodological blunder: since the question is whether or not we can trust an account of an apparition, we must establish in some other area the mental illness of the seer which would sufficiently explain her inventions.

This rule, formulated by a specialist, Henri Ey, is as valid for inventions of the imagination as for hallucination: «To ask if St. Therese, John Tauler, or Bemadette Soubirous had hallucinations (one could just as well say: “if Sister Lucy fabricated things”) is to go back to the only problem, which difficult as it is, can be resolved: were these mystics mentally ill? Because of course, what the validity of the judgement of reality and illusion depends on in this case, is the diagnostic we can apply to the psychopathological nature of the consciousness and of the existence of the visionary.»⁷⁹⁰

In other words, was Sister Lucy mentally ill? This is the only question that matters. Dhanis does not supply the slightest beginning of a proof that would allow us to say so. This completely destroys the across the board accusation of fabricating that he brings to bear upon the secret in general, and against the Memoirs of Sister Lucy.

FATIMA I... NO MORE CREDIBLE THAN FATIMA II!

On the other hand, his thesis is incoherent because it cannot be confined only to the rejection of Fatima II... He is necessarily led, little by little, *to contest the whole of the apparitions and message of Fatima I*. In 1941, he says, Lucy was fabricating things to the point of inventing, under the influence of recent events, the principal themes of the secret which she dared to attribute to Our Lady in 1917: the aurora borealis as announcing the war, the role of Russia as the scourge of God, and the beginning of the war “in the reign of Pius XI”. But according to Dhanis, she had begun much earlier to distort the message by her imaginary additions. Since 1937 she had described in detail the whole scenario of the apparitions of the Angel, which Dhanis strongly suggests is «an account due, in great part, to the imagination». Nor is there any reason to stop so early... We have seen that since 1925-26 Lucy claimed to have visions of the Immaculate Heart of Mary which seem quite doubtful to our censor... The “apparitions” of Pontevedra would be simple plagiarism – always unconscious, of course! – of the revelations of Paray-le-Monial.

When all is said and done, the whole of Fatima I rests only on that short period when the testimony of Lucy was still credible: from 1917 to 1925. If this is the case, we would find Father Dhanis quite imprudent to rely on such a seer... But there is a better refutation at hand: Lucy could not have entirely invented the apparitions of the Angel in 1936 because they already figure in the interrogation of the children by Canon Formigao, on October 19, 1917. Later on we will go into all the necessary details; here let us concern ourselves only with the hypothesis of Dhanis: «Did our three shepherds have a sort of hallucination, about seven months before the cycle of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin?»⁷⁹¹ And again: «Can one say that, at the moment when the angel gave the children the miraculous communion, they had a banal hallucination?»⁷⁹²

Possibly a hallucinator in 1916, and a fabricator from at least 1925, the witness of the great authentic apparitions (!) of 1917 would have enjoyed only a brief moment of lucidity! The very year of the apparitions of Our Lady is not exempt from all suspicion: Dhanis seriously brings up the hypothesis that the children were perhaps influenced by the history of La Salette, which Lucy's mother had read to her children: «It is normal then to ask if the story of La Salette, with its famous secret, did not provoke the hallucinations.»⁷⁹³ In the end he seems to discard the accusation, but as always with Dhanis. it is replaced only by other hypotheses which are not any more solidly founded, and thus allow the doubt to subsist.

While he is at it, Dhanis equally also casts suspicion on the testimony of Jacinta: «As we can see», he writes, «the child is confused and she invents things.» Concerning one of her prophecies, he waxes ironic: «One might also ask if the imagination of the sick little child was not perhaps the only cause of this supposed revelation.»⁷⁹⁴

Once words like “hallucination”, and “unconscious fabrication” are introduced, how can their application be limited? Father Dhanis, in spite of his claims, shows himself incapable of doing so. Father Alonso remarks that using the most miniscule evidence, «Dhanis has forged a hypothesis as great as a cathedral, which can undermine not only the history of the apparitions of the Angel, but also – for why shouldn't we take the hypothesis to its logical conclusion? – absolutely the whole history of Fatima.»⁷⁹⁵ In the final analysis, this dichotomy according to which Fatima I is credible and Fatima II is not, appears entirely artificial and a pure fantasy. If Fatima II is so unreliable, then neither can Fatima I be any more reliable. Thus, the whole structure of Father Dhanis' critique falls

like a house of cards.

THE DISCIPLES OF DHANIS: FATIMA I DISPUTED. The ultimate proof that the in-between position of Dhanis is untenable is supplied by the imposing succession of disciples that it created. All of them understood quite well the obvious meaning of his study, and leaving aside without scruple the jesuitical circumlocutions of their mentor, they passed openly to the attack, wrongly transforming all their suspicions into solid conclusions, as if they were well established by historical criticism. Nor do they embarrass themselves any more with the prudent reserve of Dhanis on the subject of Fatima I... No, it is against Fatima as a whole that they direct their critiques, their abuse, their sarcasm.

The stupefying review of the work of Dhanis by Cardinal Journet, in his periodical *Nova et Vetera*,⁷⁹⁶ must be read. It is an indictment full of passion, ill-temper and scorn against everything even remotely touching on Fatima. Nothing is neglected; even the most fragile hypotheses of Father Dhanis are presented, through and through, as so many unimpeachable accusations. On reading it, nothing would remain of Fatima!

Nor was Journet alone. Father Alonso, in *Fatima y la critica*, gives an impressive list of all «the copy cats» of Dhanis.⁷⁹⁷ They are legion, and in almost every country of Europe: Otto Karrer, Schazler, Brennikmeter, de Letter, Martindale, Stahlin, Karl Rahner, Kloppenburg, Baumann, Bernardus. The list is not exhaustive; others will soon follow: Jacquemet, Fesquet, Rouquette, etc.

CONCLUSION: THERE ARE ONLY TWO SOLUTIONS

In spite of the certain fact, surprising at first glance, of the progressive revelation of the message, Fatima forms an indissociable whole which the critique of Father Dhanis attempted in vain to separate. Neither historical criticism of the witnesses, nor Catholic theology allow us to establish such a rupture. It is all or nothing. The in-between thesis is untenable because it is fundamentally incoherent. It rejects too much for what it accepts, and accepts too much for what it contests.

Thus, only two solutions remain. If Fatima II is false, then Fatima I is equally false, and the whole thing is false from beginning to end. This is the thesis of the rationalists: following in the footsteps of the original opposition, the freemasons

and republicans who violently campaigned against Fatima, their successors add on, as a new proof of the fraud, the later development of the message. Compared to the thesis of the progresso-modernists, one must recognize for their thesis at least a certain frankness and a greater logic. For the authenticity of Fatima II depends entirely on that of Fatima I; they saw that and we must agree with them.

In the end, there is one decisive question: Were there, in 1917, true apparitions and authentic miracles. or was it a huge fraud? We are confined to one or the other of these alternatives, and on this depends the message of Fatima in its totality.

CHAPTER II

THE RATIONALIST SOLUTION OF GERARD DE SEDE

Fatima. Enquête sur une Imposture (Fatima: Investigation into a Fraud). This is the title of a book by Gerard de Sede, published in 1977 by Alain Moreau publications. On the inset, the blurb gives the tone of the work: «Here is the documentation on the greatest politico-religious fraud of our times: Fatima.

«After two years of investigation, Gerard de Sede exposes the working of this strange operation which began as a fraud with the alleged vision of three young shepherds, and has continued for sixty years.

«In 1917 Our Lady is supposed to have appeared on a holm oak to three young shepherd children of a Portuguese village. Miracle? Hallucination? Fraud? Whatever the case may be, their declarations are behind a fantastic political, financial, and religious exploitation, the beneficiaries of which were a powerful local clergy, the Portuguese government, the Vatican and the international right wing... Who really knows what influence the “Fatima advocates” have throughout the world?... Who finances the Blue Army of Fatima?... Gerard de Sede answers all these questions as a journalist and historian.»

The whole work is in this vein, animated from beginning to end with the same Voltairian spirit. Its goal is clear: to uproot, by any means, the belief of the faithful in Fatima. Well done for its genre, it will undoubtedly succeed and do immense harm to a number of uninformed readers...

What are we to do, faced with such a work? Certainly it is out of the question to answer it in the same tone... But is not answering him already giving him too much honour? Why not simply let the book fall into a well deserved oblivion? Because, it seems to us, we can do better. Why not get a hold of this book and show that it can be one of the most striking, most convincing proofs of the Apparitions of Fatima? What better revenge, what better reparation than to turn the insult and blasphemy into a solid apologetical proof? May Our Lady of Fatima help us! *Ave Maria!*

If we believe in Fatima, if we want to spread its message, it is not because it pleases us. No, it is because with the Church, we are sure that at Fatima there

was an unquestionable supernatural manifestation, and a final grace offered to our endangered world. We are sure that Fatima is true, for objective reasons, because it has furnished ample proofs of its credibility. Therefore we cannot but rejoice to see finally the contrary thesis openly maintained with passion, with vigour. If Fatima is true, the confrontation with the most virulent, even the most malevolent criticism can only contribute to making its bright light shine even more brightly, as was the case with the Gospel, which emerged victorious after more than a century of rationalist and modernist criticism.

A FLAGRANT IMBALANCE. Gerard de Sede's book is a milestone. Until that time, at least in France, the thesis of fraud had hardly made an appearance. At the Bibliotheque Nationale, our author had to make a sorry discovery: «113 apologetic works on Fatima totalling 16,987 pages (sic!), but only two critical pamphlets scarcely totalling 100 pages... Thus the incense-bearers of Fatima have, so to speak, a monopoly on the floor.»⁷⁹⁸ This “flagrant imbalance” is universal: «in all the Spanish-speaking countries, in West Germany and the United States», everywhere. How curious!... It goes without saying that we have not taken the time to verify the total page-numbers of pro-Fatima and anti-Fatima works. That would be a waste of time. On the other hand we were quite astonished, after having gone through the same card catalogues of the Bibliotheque Nationale, not to have found in our author's superabundant bibliography the names of his valiant forerunners, or any mention of the titles of their works...

One can only understand the reasons for this silence after having read these works, which were the first in France to tell “the truth” about “the Fatima fraud”. The “flagrant imbalance” that Gerard de Sede speaks of is qualitative as well as quantitative... Why did he not cite *La Vérité sur les Apparitions de Fatima* (*The Truth about the Apparitions of Fatima*) by André Lorulot? Was Gerard de Sede ashamed of his predecessors? It is true that this publication of *La Documentation antireligieuse* does not get very far off the ground. There we find such juicy pearls as the following: after having assured us that private or collective hallucination explains everything, both the apparitions and the «supposed solar miracle», the thinker of «militant reason» continues triumphantly: «When Joan of Arc hears the voices of St. Michael (that's right – St. Michael) or St. Catherine, we are convinced that these persons, long dead (sic!), cannot speak to anybody. There are hallucinations of the ear, just as there are hallucinations of the eye!»⁷⁹⁹ What retort can we make to such conviction?! Why also does not G. de Sede cite the articles of Prosper Alfaric in the Cahiers Ernest Renan: *Fatima*

1917-1954. How is a Holy Place Created? The same author's study on *The Origins of Marian Devotion* could also have been quoted. Although he did not hesitate to use this book, G. de Sede surely judged that the above mentioned articles did not carry any weight...

FINALLY... "THE WORK OF A HISTORIAN". In this context we recognize unreservedly the obvious superiority of G. de Sede. His book is easy reading, and the style is clear. The mind-boggling erudition that he demonstrates will make a great impression on the readers: the author seems to have read everything on Fatima. What an enormous mass of facts and documents he has used! He has even taken the trouble to compose a list of "French Fatima advocates", in which our own superior, the Abbé de Nantes, and his movement, have the honour of being high on the list: «... The Catholic Counter-Reform is conducting an intense propaganda in favour of Fatima.»⁸⁰⁰ At the National Library of Lisbon he has noticed the same "imbalance" as at Paris: faced with 148 works in favour of Fatima one finds only one work against, that of Tomas da Fonseca, published in 1958 and prohibited. G. de Sede could have used the more recent work of Joao Ilharco, *Fatima Unmasked*, published in 1971, after the liberalization of censorship by Professor Caetano. Professor Oliveira Marques, an important figure in the Revolution of April 25, 1974, an illustrious historian of the left who also raised the accusation of fraud against Fatima, might have kindly assisted G. de Sede in his research at the National Library of Lisbon, of which he became the director. He is thanked for his kind assistance, along with the ambassador of Portugal in France. We are sure that our author, so brilliantly patronized, had access in Portugal to all the best anti-Fatima sources. He also knows of the fundamental works of the Catholic historians: those of Canon Barthas, and even of some Portuguese authors. Moreover, it is a complete work in its own way; it examines all aspects of the question: the theology of the apparitions, the critical problem, the political implications of the event. He claims to have studied the documentation as a historian, clearly and objectively.⁸⁰¹

THE WORK OF A JOURNALIST. He even took the trouble to conduct his investigation on the spot in Portugal, from April to July 1975: «This book is the work of a journalist, using interviews as well as library research.»⁸⁰² There, he interrogated everybody. Finally the adversaries of Fatima could speak out: The «revolution of April 25, 1974 put an end to forty years of dictatorship». «The books began to come out of the obscurity of the libraries, private archives began to open, tongues were untied.»⁸⁰³ What promising affirmations: books, archives,

testimonies previously unknown, which will surely reopen the question!... «After half a century of enforced silence, the old witnesses who had once seen the Fatima enterprise come into existence and develop, freely spoke of their memories.»⁸⁰⁴

Our journalist also went to find the “impresarios of Fatima”. No doubt introduced by his friends, the people behind the «Christians for socialism» movement, he was able to meet numerous ecclesiastical personalities: Bishop Alberto Cosme do Amaral, present Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, Don Luciano Guerra, rector of the Sanctuary, Canon Galamba, historian of Fatima and director of the review *Fatima 50*, Bishop Venancio, former Bishop of Fatima; at Aljustrel he was able to meet Lucy’s sister and the cousins of Francisco and Jacinta; he even asked to see Sister Lucy in her Carmel at Coimbra. Of course, when he was refused this gave him a chance to wax ironic...

ALL THE STRONGEST OBJECTIONS AGAINST FATIMA. Somehow G. de Sede is able to boast of presenting «a balanced documentation, as yet unpublished».⁸⁰⁵ Finally, he has produced the critical work loudly requested by Laurentin and all the enemies of Fatima in 1967: «this desire expressed ten years ago has, until the present, remained without effect. It was to meet this desire that this book was written.»⁸⁰⁶ We willingly concede to the author that he has written the finest example that can be given of the rationalist explanation of Fatima. With great cleverness he has maintained the radical thesis of politico-clerical fraud. As Dom Jean-Nesmy remarks, this work is «a sort of compilation of all the arguments accumulated against Fatima».⁸⁰⁷ It is on these grounds that the book particularly interests us, since nobody else succeeded in doing a better job of this type of work. It allows us to judge, in all objectivity, how valid the rationalist thesis is.

A DANGEROUS BOOK. An examination of this work is very interesting, and very useful as well. With such great claims, a large supply of information, and an apparently rational thesis which eliminates all recourse to any sort of supernatural intervention, this book can be very dangerous for any reader without a perfect knowledge of all sources of the history of Fatima. Who can by himself test all the criticisms, all the accusations, all the worst suspicions, formulated on each page against the seers and those responsible for promoting the Fatima Pilgrimage, unless one has made it the object of a special study? At every step the arguments seem to carry weight, and inevitably shake the faith of the pro-Fatima reader. That is why that which our superior, the Abbé de Nantes,

wrote about a similar book to justify his critique of it, applies perfectly to the work of G. de Sede: «Is there, then, any use in refuting him? Yes. Any book which claims to reduce the Christian explanation to dust must be refuted. For he pretends to bring to a Christian event a scientific explanation that has the advantage, at first sight, of the appearance of rationality over faith.»⁸⁰⁸

I. A CATALOGUE OF OBJECTIONS AGAINST FATIMA

Let us go right away to the strongest part of the objections, where G. de Sede makes a list of real difficulties, which have long been raised against Fatima. This is a list of well founded criticisms which must be answered.

“THE CONTRADICTIONS OF LUCY”

«Everybody recognizes that the principal source from which we learn about the apparitions of Fatima at 1917 is Lucy. Thus the first question to be raised is that of the value of her testimony.»⁸⁰⁹ Now, G. de Sede undertakes to show that Lucy is in no way credible.

1. The accounts given by Lucy are «evasive and hesitant»: when questioned on October 19, 1917, on the apparition of the 13th, Lucy responds to so many questions with: «I don't remember...», that it becomes disconcerting. However, Canon Formigao, who questions her, is very benevolent. These hesitations, this silence, are a fact that we easily notice. De Sede concludes right away: «Thus after six days, Lucy is unable to describe with precision a supposedly prodigious event, which ought to have been engraved on her memory. This reveals either a profound indifference to the event, an exceptional lack of memory, or an extreme fear of contradicting herself.»⁸¹⁰

2. The contradictions between the three seers: «Lucy's story is on many points in contradiction with the fragmentary accounts of Jacinta, as well as those which were, with great difficulty, squeezed out of Francisco.»⁸¹¹ Lucy affirms that the Lady had little golden earrings. Francisco declares that her ears could not be seen because they were hidden by the veil.

To the question: «Will Our Lady appear again?» Lucy answers: «I don't think so, She said nothing to me about it.» Jacinta declares on the contrary: «She said that

this would be the last time She would come, and She said again today that this would be the last time.»

«Likewise, again on the subject of this last apparition of October 13, Lucy declared to Canon Formigao that she saw St. Joseph appear with the Child Jesus hanging around his neck, while Francisco and Jacinta said they saw the Child standing beside St. Joseph.»⁸¹²

These are contradictions only in appearance and they have a simple solution, but they do not fail to plant suspicions in the mind of the reader. Some are still more serious:

3. «The accounts given by Lucy contradict each other.»⁸¹³ Lucy supposedly contradicted herself on the apparitions of the Angel,⁸¹⁴ and in her account of the apparitions of Our Lady: «To Father Ferreira de Lacerda, Lucy declared: “The Lady arrived, coming from the east”. To Canon Formigao, on the contrary, she declared on September 27, 1917: “I did not see Her coming from any direction; She appeared on the holm oak.”»⁸¹⁵

Another example, from October 19, 1917: «She had white slippers.» (To Father Lacerda.) To Father McGlynn, in 1946, she answered the same question, «I don’t remember, because I never saw Her feet.»⁸¹⁶

Finally, G. de Sede claims that she contradicted herself in her description of the apparition of the Holy Family, October 13, 1917.⁸¹⁷

THE FATAL ERROR: “THE WAR WILL END TODAY”

The devastating argument that G. de Sede prefers to dwell on during the whole length of his account of October 13, (we shall see why), is the famous «false prophecy» of Lucy: on that day she «committed an irreparable fault, in placing on the lips of the Virgin an absurd statement, which the incense-bearers of Fatima would labour for a third of a century to try to have us forget.»⁸¹⁸ Indeed after the apparition, Lucy announced that the war would end that very day. To Canon Formigao she repeats: «The Virgin said... that the war would finish today, and that the soldiers would come home soon.»

On October 19, the poor child stubbornly entangled herself: «Our Lady said it

just like that: the war will end today, expect your soldiers to come home very soon.» Jacinta made similar declarations. «Over the years, the promoters of Fatima will strive to erase, by various retouches, this blunder of the child, who attributed an absurdity to the Virgin.»⁸¹⁹

After such hesitations, such contradictions, how can one maintain as does Canon Galamba, that Lucy enjoyed an exceptional memory? «If this is true», de Sede concludes, «one of two things is true: either Lucy is deliberately lying when she invokes these gaps in her memory or contradicts herself, or the liars are those who transcribed her declarations. In the first case as well as the second, and also in the third and the last one, where Lucy is sincere but lacking memory and given to making things up, the whole structure of Fatima rests on testimonies that do not have the slightest value.»⁸²⁰

Along with these five pages devoted to a critique of the testimonies (p. 127-132), more or less seriously handled, and where G. de Sede has reproduced the catalogue of Joao Ilharco, he devotes five other pages to «the Catholic critique» of Father Dhanis and his disciples (p. 233-238). In these ten pages the author brings up the real difficulties posed by the testimonies of the seers... At the end of this examination he settles the question, triumphantly: All this proves that it is simply a question of lies or wild stories! but this is going too quickly into the work at hand... *For although it is easy to make accusations of fraud, a number of facts remain for which it will be necessary to provide a plausible explanation. It is here precisely that the insurmountable obstacle lies.*

II. THE RATIONALIST «EXPLANATION» OR PROOF BY THE ABSURD

Lucy is a stupid child, manipulated by the clergy. Moreover she is a liar. She is even a mythomaniac! Convenient accusations... but they are not easily compatible with each other. It will be necessary to choose between them. *Be that as it may, objectively, the apparitions at Fatima appear first of all as a series of unquestionable facts which all equally admit.* On May 13, 1917, three little shepherds claimed that the Blessed Virgin had appeared to them and spoken to them; that is a first fact. Then five times in a row, on the thirteenth of each month, they maintained that they saw Her again; that is the second fact. From month to month, the crowds became more and more numerous. On October 13, there were 70,000 people at the Cova who all claimed to have seen an

extraordinary cosmic phenomenon in the sky: “The dance of the sun.” Here is a series of testimonies which are, as such, so many facts that the historian must explain in a plausible manner. There is the most arduous task, to which G. de Sede dedicates the major part of his work. We will follow our author step by step in his purely natural explanation of all the facts. Then our own critique will necessarily be mingled in with the exposition of the rationalist thesis.

1. THE CLERICAL MACHINATIONS

Everything began with murky clerical machinations. We even know the conversation which is behind the whole affair. In May, 1914, three priests met at Torres Novas, not far from Fatima: Abel Ventura do Ceu, Father de Sousa, and Manuel Marques Ferreira, the young parish priest of Fatima. «When the other two asked him how things were going in his parish, he answered with a sigh: “Nothing ever happens. The region is poor, the earth is not very productive. The people are wretched, without initiative.” Then Benvenuto de Sousa said to him: “There is one way of rapidly enriching your parish: an apparition like La Salette or Lourdes.” Manuel Marques Ferreira reflected a moment, and then agreed: “You are right, especially since the environment lends itself to this sort of thing.”»⁸²¹

THE PARISH PRIEST OF FATIMA AND THE APPARITIONS. In fact, if there was trickery, there was no one other than the parish priest of Fatima who could choose the actors and direct the whole affair without raising suspicions. However, this hypothesis goes against the most obvious historical truth. It is well known that the apparitions of 1917, far from being a profitable enterprise for the parish priest, were on the contrary prejudicial for him. He never ceased complaining about the fact that the faithful left their offerings on the spot of the apparitions, while the work begun on the parish church had to be interrupted for lack of resources. For Father Ferreira will always steadfastly refuse to receive any offerings left at the Cova da Iria. Discouraged, he will request a transfer and will leave Fatima in the beginning of 1919.⁸²² *Is fecit cui prodest...* That is the profit he got out of the apparitions!

A PURE INVENTION. Moreover, the anecdote in question was completely invented. G. de Sede is well aware of it because he puts forth reservations which alone suffice to ruin the foundation of such anecdotes: «Did everything begin in May of 1914? In any case, this is what *we are led to believe* by the anecdote

related to us by several persons during our investigation in Portugal.» Who are these persons? G. de Sede does not tell us! At least he gives us his sources: Once again it is his mentor Tomas da Fonseca. Here is how the ecclesiastical plot was discovered: «The conversation was held before a witness, Father Fernando da Silva, a military chaplain at the time. Being somewhat scandalized, he reported it immediately to one of his friends, Dr. Luis Cebola, one of the most celebrated Portuguese psychiatrists, *who saw to it that it became known. Thus the anecdote was known at Lisbon even before the apparitions of Fatima.* After fifty years of enforced silence on a subject that was to remain taboo as long as the former regime was in place, the “old Republicans” take pleasure in telling the story.»

«The anecdote was known at Lisbon even before the apparitions...» In that case, how is it possible that the republican and anti-Fatima press of that time made no allusion to it, contenting themselves with making Fatima an invention of the Jesuit and clerical reaction, without being any more specific? The dictatorship of Salazar had nothing to do with the affair: Why did the “old Republicans” neither speak nor write about it from 1917 to 1926, when they were still in power, and controlled all the media? They had nine years to denounce the “Fatima fraud”, with supporting documents. Why did they not do so then? Because the famous anecdote that explains everything too easily had not been invented yet... No doubt it was necessary to wait until the supposed witnesses had disappeared!

De Sede concludes his decisive anecdote with words that are significant: «We give it here for what it is worth (sic), and with the reserves of usage (?!).» Very good! We understand. He continues: «Let us stress however (sic) that a historian as serious (da Fonseca evidently is not serious!) as Professor A. H. de Oliveira Marques, director of the National Library of Lisbon, in no way excludes the possibility that Fatima rests on a fraud: “In May 1917 (he writes), the Church, or certain of its local elements, perhaps organized and certainly exploited what are known as the apparitions of Fatima.”» The evidence? The proofs? The republican historian is too “serious” to go into details.

Let us continue the explanation of our rationalist. Once the idea of «operation Fatima» was launched, to set it in motion it would be enough to copy La Salette and Lourdes. The priests had chosen their actors: three illiterate, stubborn and stupid children.

2. THE APPARITION OF MAY 13, 1917

What happened, then? «It is very difficult to admit that the three children on May 13, 1917 were the victims of a simultaneous hallucination at such a well chosen place and time, as we have seen. Thus, at the basis of the first apparition, there was an objective reality.»⁸²³ G. de Sede has seen that, in the case of Fatima, the hypothesis of hallucination is, for many reasons, decidedly untenable. What then? There was an «arrangement», an «operation planned from all angles».⁸²⁴ But it is certain that the children saw something quite real, objective.⁸²⁵ What does that mean? Here is the explanation given by the leaders of anti-Fatima rationalism.

THE THESIS OF TOMAS DA FONSECA. «Here is what he discovered», docilely related by G. de Sede:⁸²⁶ «In 1916, a colonel named Genipro had been sent to the area of Fatima to do some topographical surveys. Since he was working there for some time, he also brought his spouse, a beautiful, elegant young woman, always dressed in white during the summer. She was a fanatical Catholic, and as her husband confided later on, it was she who had tried to approach Lucy. The colonel added that his wife spoke several times not only with Lucy but also with Jacinta and Francisco.»

Imagine... Colonel Genipro's wife climbing up on a holm oak! We will not dwell on the grotesque character of the explanation. We will only admire the precision of the testimony: When did the colonel confide this? To whom? As always da Fonseca is very evasive about his sources! De Sede has to buttress the story, adding: «These facts were confirmed for us by a witness, Dr. Hernani Dias Amado... now eighty years old.» A witness of what, please? His respectable age leads us to believe that he took part in the fraud... In this case his testimony, which quite curiously comes very late, astonishes us by its laconicism. He must have known more about it: why did he not reveal the names of the priests who instigated the affair?

G. de Sede assures us that «this explanation of the facts is not without probability». The only appearance of proof that he gives is the following little fact, related by Canon Barthas: «Two days after the apparition (of August 19), the parish priest of Fatima drove to Aljustrel a group of five ladies, one of which was a young girl of fifteen, dressed in white. He asks Jacinta which of these ladies resembled the vision. Having stared at all of them, she said: “None; the other Lady was much more beautiful.” – “And this young lady dressed in white?” – “She is very beautiful, but the Lady I saw at the Cova is much more beautiful!”»⁸²⁷ Such is the only fact which is supposed to prove the fraud: «This

at least proves that the parish priest did not exclude, and desired to avoid, a misadventure»,⁸²⁸ G. de Sede comments. You see, he suggests, the parish priest himself had suspected the fraud! Our “historian” who wants to use everything as a weapon, and draw on all possible arguments, is hardly embarrassed by the contradictions: did he not just explain to us twenty pages ago that it was precisely Father Ferreira who had launched the operation, chosen the actors and prepared everything in advance? The fact related proves on the contrary that *our three shepherds were incapable of confusing a beautiful young woman with the Heavenly apparition, surrounded by light, which almost blinded them...* It also confirms what has already been proven a thousand other ways: the parish priest of Fatima, who had so little sympathy for the three seers, was very hesitant and was always cold and harsh towards them. *In any case it absolutely excludes the idea that he himself was involved in the supposed fraud in any way!*

Another problem: Tomas da Fonseca seems to be unaware of the chronology. The lady in question who supposedly played the role of the apparition... was not at Fatima in 1917... but in 1916!

JOAO ILHARCO: THE HYPOTHESIS OF THE STATUE. Those who maintained that there had been fraud had to invent something else... Da Fonseca’s work had appeared in 1958... Joao Ilharco, who writes in 1971, *proposes another explanation*: «Asking questions about this doll, 1.1 metres high (?), which spoke without budging or even moving its lips (?), he concluded that someone (?) had placed on the holm oak a statue of the Virgin whose appearance was familiar to the children (?) and that an operator (?) hidden in the bushes, after drawing attention to the statue by capturing the rays of the sun in a mirror, had conversed with Lucy.»⁸²⁹ We will not waste time commenting on such foolishness: here he is swimming in a sea of impossibilities. By whom was the statue placed on the holm oak? When? How? If it was «familiar to the children», why didn’t they recognize it? The famous “doll” upon which Ilharco builds his whole edifice is a pure invention taken from a fantastic account of the apparitions, published on July 22, 1917... in *O Seculo*, a liberal and anticlerical daily of Lisbon, which at that time was very satirical on the apparitions of Fatima.⁸³⁰ Using such sources, it is easy to write history as one pleases! Fortunately, to be taken in by the stories of Joao Ilharco, one would really have to want to be. His work, *Fatima Unmasked*, published in 1971, provoked a whole series of critiques in Portugal that left no part of it standing.⁸³¹ We have even learned that, «to avoid “the scandal that his book provoked”, Ilharco

offered to retract his publication.»⁸³²

THE “EXPLANATION” OF GERARD DE SEDE. The rationalist critique goes on. In 1977, G. de Sede proposes a third solution, absolutely ingenious because it is synthetic: «The version of Joao Ilharco and that of Tomas da Fonseca do not, moreover, seem irreconcilable: Lucy could have seen the colonel’s wife at Estrumeiras, a statue at the Cova da Iria, and then mixed up the two recollections.»⁸³³ Once we present in detail the testimonies on the apparitions of the Angel in 1915 and 1916, we will see that the ingenious synthetic theory only doubles the incoherent statements, incredible assumptions, and contradictions.

THE UNQUESTIONABLE FACT. We find the perfect refutation of the rationalist fabrications in an unquestionable historical fact. Not the fact of the apparitions themselves, but first of all the fact of the witness given: the account given by little Jacinta to her mother on the evening of May 13, 1917. Confirmed by the agreement of Francisco and the accounts of Lucy the next day, this witness – although written down only a few months later in the interrogations and articles in the press – is a certain historical fact. A few days later, the whole village knew it and soon the whole country would know what the three children had related. Now it is this initial witness that all the theories are expected to explain.

Ti Olympia, the mother of Francisco and Jacinta, tells the story: «The little child ran to greet me and threw herself at my legs, hugging me as I had never seen her do before. “Oh, mother!” she cried, full of emotion, “today I saw Our Lady at the Cova da Iria!” “That’s likely, isn’t it!... I suppose you’re a saint to be seeing Our Lady!” Jacinta seemed downcast at what I said, but she came into the house with me, saying again: “But I saw Her!” Then she told me what had happened, of the lightning and her fear because of it... of the light... and the beautiful Lady surrounded by light so dazzling you could hardly look at it... of the Rosary which they were to say every day...

«But I didn’t believe anything she was saying and hardly listened to her. “Little fool!” I said to her. “Sure, sure Our Lady is going to appear to you.” After that I went to get some food for the pig. My husband had stayed in the corral to see if it was getting on with the other animals. When we had finished seeing to the animals, we went back to the house. My Manuel sat down by the hearth and began to eat his supper. His brother-in-law, Antonio da Silva, happened to be there too, and all my children – as far as I can remember, all eight of them. Then

I said to Jacinta: “Tell us that story about Our Lady in the Cova da Iria.”

«And she told us what happened with the greatest simplicity. There had been a most beautiful Lady... dressed in white with a gold cord hanging from Her neck to Her waist. Her head was covered with a mantle, whiter than milk, and fell to Her feet. It was edged with gold and was so beautiful... Her hands had been joined, so... And my little girl got up off the stool and stood with her hands folded on the level of her chest in imitation of the vision. She said: “The Lady held a Rosary in Her hand; a beautiful Rosary shining like the stars, and a crucifix that shone... She spoke with Lucy a great deal, but not with me, or Francisco. I heard all that She said. Oh, mother, we must say the Rosary every day; the Lady said this to Lucy. She said too that She would take us all to Heaven, and other things which I can’t remember, but which Lucy knows. When She went back into Heaven the doors seemed to shut so quickly that I thought Her feet would get caught... Oh, Heaven is so beautiful!... It’s like there were lots of wild roses there!...”

«Francisco confirmed these declarations. The girls were much interested in the story, but the boys inclined to tease.»⁸³⁴

Let the reader judge for himself if the dreamings of the rationalists allow them to explain such an account! And our anti-Fatima critic is only at the beginning of his labours...

3. THE FIVE SUBSEQUENT APPARITIONS

The fact is clear and obvious: five times in a row the children said they saw the Blessed Virgin again, and later on there were hundreds, and then thousands of witnesses. For what is unbelievable – and still more incredible on the hypothesis of fraud! – is that the “inventors of the fraud” had the audacity to announce on May 13 the day and the hour of the five subsequent apparitions, on the thirteenth of each month... Each time the crowd heard Lucy speak with the Vision, and after each apparition the children described it and reported the responses of “the Lady”. Here, reduced to a bare minimum, are the facts nobody contests, not even G. de Sede!

Here the rationalist “explanation” is even more incredible, incoherent and ridiculous than for the apparition of May. The presence of the crowd renders the

difficulty greater: «The first vision of the little shepherds of Fatima was that of a real entity – either a person or statue. *But quite obviously nothing similar can be assigned as the basis of the five subsequent “apparitions”*, at least the four that took place in public.»⁸³⁵ Really! So no longer is it a question of an aerial promenade of the colonel’s wife, or an ordinary statue illuminated by the sunlight reflected in a mirror! No more actress hidden in the bushes to transmit the message! So then, what happened? Something else must be invented... Let us take time out to read the key page where G. de Sede presents the most skilful and elaborate of the rationalist explanations. Here is the text in extenso, a model of its genre.⁸³⁶

THE RATIONALIST “EXPLANATION”. «For these apparitions (the five subsequent ones), it is thus legitimate to ask if Lucy dos Santos – her two cousins were only stooges playing a minor role – was the prey of hallucinations “induced” by the first vision; if she conducted a simulation on her own initiative; or if the “secret” she claimed to have received was not simply an order not to reveal to anybody under any circumstances, under pain of going to hell, that the messages received from the Lady seen the first day would henceforth be transmitted by someone to whom she would owe both confidence and obedience.

«It would be possible to choose between these three explanations, which are equally plausible, only if Lucy were subjected to clinical examinations of which we knew the conclusions. Since this was not the case, in the actual state of the case we are obliged to rely on interrogations.

«Let us remark however that the last of these three hypotheses was that of Joao Ilharco, who thinks that the person who transmitted to Lucy the messages she presented to the public and her interrogators as coming from the Blessed Virgin, was Father Faustino José Facinto Ferreira, parish priest and dean of Olival.

«Among other things, he bases his hypothesis on the following facts:

«1. At the time of the Apparitions, Lucy – as she herself revealed twenty years later – stayed two or three days with Father Faustino on the pretext of spending some time with his sister (“He had the patience to spend long hours with me, teaching me the practice of virtue and guiding me with wise counsels.” – Memoirs of Lucy.)

«2. Again according to Lucy, it is Father Faustino who ordered the three children

to “keep the secret”.

«3. Numerous witnesses noted that during the gatherings at the Cova da Iria the children seemed to be the prey of intense fear.

«4. Certain prayers which Lucy affirms were taught to her by the Virgin bear the stamp of Father Faustino. (“The Father showed a special devotion for Our Lady of the Rosary and the souls in purgatory; now at Fatima the Lady presented Herself as Our Lady of the Rosary and taught the children a prayer for the souls in purgatory.”)

«5. It was Father Faustino who led the Bishop of Leiria to believe in the apparitions of Fatima.

«Joao Ilharco himself recognizes that this conclusion presents itself as the reconstruction of a puzzle, of which some pieces are still missing.»

Such a text, by its apparent erudition, will no doubt leave the reader indecisive and embarrassed. We would have to be able to verify all his sources to show *just how impossible it is to explain the apparitions of Fatima by a clerical fraud*. G. de Sede proposes the three hypotheses as equally plausible, although he obviously leans to the third one, that of Joao Ilharco.

THE FRAUD OF FATHER FAUSTINO, DEAN OF OLIVAL. This is absolutely untenable, for many reasons.

If the hypothesis were true, how incredible it would be for Lucy herself, in her Memoirs, to reveal the name of the author of the messages!

To say that Lucy made some visits to Father Faustino “at the time of the apparitions” is a pure lie. Although the dean of Olival wrote a favourable article after hearing an enthusiastic account from some of his parishioners who were present at the apparitions of July 13, he did not meet the seers for the first time until *after the apparitions*. Only then did he take charge of their souls and become their counsellor. No doubt in 1918, he invited Lucy and Jacinta to spend two or three days with him. After Jacinta became ill, Lucy returned there alone.⁸³⁷

As for the prayer for the souls in Purgatory, which supposedly bears the stamp of Father Faustino... it has been proven that this was not the original formula, but

an inexact one which spread later on during the pilgrimages. The prayer given by the children immediately after the apparitions did not speak explicitly of the souls in Purgatory.

Evidently, those who maintain that it was a fraud perpetrated by the clergy cannot succeed in giving the name of a single priest who was in the least capable of playing this role. The dean of Olival could not have been behind the affair any more than the parish priest of Fatima. Canon Barthas, in a sound study on the attitude of the clergy towards the apparitions in the first few years,⁸³⁸ shows convincingly that no priest could have “coached” the children. In a village, everybody knows each other. But no priest was familiar with the seers. And when G. de Sede must give a reference taken from this study, why does he cite only the title, giving neither the chapter nor the page number?⁸³⁹ No doubt because the demonstration is far too convincing, and would bring his thesis to naught.

This explanation is also incredible from the psychological point of view; it assumes utterly contrary qualities in the seers: to be stupid enough to let themselves be fooled so grossly, and to be exceptionally gifted to act out their roles so ably... to repeat the message learned by heart (?), without however using exactly the same expressions. They would have to have a great religious spirit, and an extreme fear of hell, but not be afraid to lie in the most shameless fashion, pretending to have seen what they had not seen at all. The explanation of Joao Ilharco is a tissue of lies and incredible assumptions.

LUCY A FAKER? «*Lucy faked it of her own accord.*» This explanation also is utterly fanciful. Moreover, it would have to be proven that Lucy was a liar. Then, even if we granted her an extraordinary cleverness, how could one attribute to a child of ten the invention of the words of the message, so profound that one could examine them indefinitely without discovering the least flaw: not the slightest childishness, the least vulgarity, the least theological error... Read, and reread the words of Our Lady, and you will conclude for yourselves: to say that a child of ten invented all that on her own is absurd.

“INDUCED HALLUCINATIONS”. «*Lucy was the victim of hallucinations “induced” by the first vision.*» In this case, Lucy would be mentally ill. But after each apparition, Jacinta and Francisco also gave testimony. We would have to assume a collective, simultaneous hallucination announced in advance! In other words it is extremely improbable. De Sede himself writes elsewhere: «It is very

difficult to admit that on May 13, 1917, the three children were *the victims of a simultaneous hallucination*, at so well chosen a place and time...»⁸⁴⁰ It is just as difficult for the following months! From the point of view of psychiatry, such a simultaneous hallucination in these conditions is a pure chimera. We shall return to this point.

THE THREEFOLD WITNESS. None of the three “explanations” has any credibility. None of the three permits us to explain an important fact, that of the triple witness which is an additional guarantee of authenticity, especially since it is a question of children who were seven, nine and ten years old, incapable of foreseeing the complex questions of adults. G. de Sede finds it convenient to neglect this fact: «Her two cousins were merely stooges in a secondary role», nor does he give them any further thought! That is too convenient. Granted, Lucy was the head of the trio, but that doesn’t prevent her cousins from being true witnesses, as we will see. Their statements do not agree on a few tiny details. Their expressions are not stereotyped, which proves that they did not learn a text by heart. These apparent or slight contradictions, which can be explained quite well by the greater or lesser extent that such or such a detail struck their attention, would be inexplicable in the case of a fraud or lesson learned by heart.

But their statements always agree on all the essentials, which reduces the other two hypotheses to naught. For a triple and identical hallucination is a pure invention. As for faking it, it would assume not only a creative genius on Lucy’s part, but an equally faultless and ingenious complicity by the younger two, whom Lucy would have to instruct in their respective roles after each apparition. Yet they were only ten, nine and seven!

Thus, to save at any price a bad cause dangerously compromised, all means are allowed: deceit, lying, and bad faith.

THE MEDICAL EXAMINATION. «It would be impossible to choose between these three explanations, equally probable in themselves, *unless Lucy were submitted to clinical examinations, of which we knew the results. Since this is not the case*, we are obliged in the present state of the question to rely on the interrogations.»⁸⁴¹

The dishonesty here shows us how bankrupt the rationalist thesis is. What is the truth? The truth is that the three seers did undergo this medical examination. The ambiguous phrasing of the author does not deny it. He even makes a very rapid

allusion to it a few pages before: «On the morning of August 13, the sub-prefect of Vila Nova de Ourem, Artur de Oliveira Santos, took the three children to the sub-prefecture to interrogate them *and have them examined by a doctor.*» We read in a footnote: «Dr. Antonio Rodrigues de Oliveira. The report of this doctor disappeared under the Salazar regime.»⁸⁴² Yet from 1917 to 1926, in the complete “liberty” of the masonic republic, our good apostles of science did not find the time to publish it. The argument is striking... against its own authors. Dom Jean-Nesmy asks: «*Why did they hide a document which surely could not be expected to favour the seers, a document which would have been of the highest interest for the critique of Fatima?* Given the manifest hostility of the administrator, one can only hold as reasonable the hypothesis that *if he did not make use of this medical examination, it was because its conclusions were not favourable to him.*»⁸⁴³

Of the three “equally plausible explanations” that supposedly explain the apparitions from June to October... nothing remains.

4. THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE CROWDS

In June sixty persons were present. In July there were four or five thousand, eighteen thousand in August, twenty-five thousand in September, and seventy thousand in October. *Such an increase in the crowds from month to month is another fact which must be explained.* Why did such great crowds travel there if absolutely nothing happened? The hypothesis of a gross deception is still more powerless, in this case, to explain the facts. When announcing an extraordinary event, although it is possible, because of the surprise factor, to draw a large crowd *once*, the people will be quickly disillusioned, and the fraud will not repeat itself. Fatima was quite different! G. de Sede is aware of it: «To attribute such episodes purely to the sleight of hand of the clergy, as does Tomas da Fonseca, a figure very much in view in the anticlerical republic of 1910, is however a rather curt explanation (what an admission!).

«Not that trickery is rare, but it does not always result in a popular cult; far from it. Indeed the development of such a cult demands the concurrence of complex historical, social and emotional factors. In short, as its name indicates, every cult develops in a culture.»⁸⁴⁴

THE SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION. We are curious to learn the profound

sociological arguments that our “intelligent” rationalist will add to the “rather curt explanation” of his mentor da Fonseca. Here they are:

«In a sense Fatima is the authentic reflection of modes of religious expression proper to a poorly developed country; if after the staging of the apparitions (sic) a popular cult developed there in a relatively spontaneous manner (sic!), it is because in this milieu faith was confused, and is still largely confused, with belief in the extraordinary, and religious conduct is confused with a type of magic.»⁸⁴⁵ Let the reader assess the sonorous emptiness of these vague generalities... Or is perhaps the author alluding to the much more precise development of page 118 of his book? By an audacious sociological argument he imagines he can explain at once both the success of the apparitions of Our Lady and the Miracle of the Sun: «What must still be explained is why, in the Vulgate of Fatima, the Marian theme was linked with a solar theme. In our opinion, it is due to the resurgence of a local tradition which is expressed in the legend of the foundation of the village.» To make a long story short: according to legend, the village of Fatima owes its name to an episode of the “reconquista”. In 1188 a young Moslem woman, *Fatima*, was taken prisoner by a Christian knight. Since the latter wished to marry her, she was baptized under the name of *Oureana*, thus giving the town *Ourem* its name. She died young and her body was transported to a place which retained its Arab name: *Fatima*. But here is the important part, which sufficiently explains everything: Fatima was the daughter of the lord of *Alcácer do Sal*. That is enough! In case you have not understood: «*Alcacer do Sol* (sic) means “castle of the sun” and *Ouranea* (sic) is the translation of the Greek Ouranos, or heaven. Being the daughter of the master of the sun at its apogee, Fatima, alias Ouranea was then – already – the Lady of Heaven. *Legends and tradition perpetuate themselves in a rather enigmatic manner* (sic!), *in the collective unconscious* where they had already taken on existence; *the existence of a very ancient cult of the “Lady From Heaven” at Fatima (?) unquestionably contributes (!) to explaining the credence that the apparitions and dance of the sun gained among the population of the region, for these themes were based on profound cultural residues.*»⁸⁴⁶ In other words, the promenade of Colonel Genipro’s wife, the statue balanced on the holm oak, and then above all “profound cultural residues” suffice to explain the increasing flow of the crowds of Portuguese people to the Cova da Iria...

«NOTHING EXTRAORDINARY...» Did not this enthusiasm come instead from the witness of the pilgrims, who on their return told everyone how they had seen, if not the Virgin Mary, at least some extraordinary events? The simplicity of the

seers, their piety, unquestionable and overwhelming cosmic phenomena... G. de Sede does not wish to hear about any of this. Let us quote once more his commentary on the apparition of September 13: «Today there are between 25 and 30,000 people. Many come to ask for the healing of a sick person, or the assurance that a departed one will go to Heaven. In a touching gesture, some people give Lucy two letters and a flask of perfume for the Virgin, but the little girl gives them this clever response: “These things are not needed in Heaven.”» (Remember that for G. de Sede Lucy is a deluded, stupid child who learned her text by heart. The question was unexpected. How, on her own, could she find a response that showed such presence of mind and delicate benevolence?) A collective psychosis develops around Fatima...

«*Since however nothing extraordinary happened, they had a rumour spread that day that a rain of flowers had fallen from Heaven.*» «*They had a rumour spread...*» and thirty thousand people went back home, full of enthusiasm... without anybody having seen anything at all! It was merely a bit of «innocent deceit»! Of course: it is enough for anyone to say any old thing, and thousands of people from every background and culture will believe it, without themselves having seen or heard anything. This “explanation” is so grotesque that it needs no commentary.

5. AND THE MEMOIRS OF SISTER LUCY?

This also is a fact to be explained. From 1938 on, the historians of Fatima claimed to cite writings where Sister Lucy, at the request of her bishop, related with more precision things she had never spoken about before – the events of her childhood, and the life and virtues of Jacinta and Francisco. *These texts exist*, and even the facsimile of the manuscript has been published. Where do they come from?

CANON GALAMBA AUTHOR OF THE MEMOIRS? For de Sede, under no circumstances can Lucy be behind these texts, which she could have slavishly copied later on: «It is clear that the author of the second Vulgate of Fatima (the Memoirs) cannot be Lucy. When, in 1921, Lucy was ushered in to the convent boarding school of Vilar, Bishop Correia da Silva was reluctant to accept her because she was so silly... The slightest internal criticism shows conclusively that she could not have composed, even at thirty or thirty-five, these texts with theological pretensions and an elegant style that are attributed to her.»⁸⁴⁷ Since it

is Canon Galamba who published the first of these famous texts, «in all logic the author of the second Vulgate is none other than Canon Galamba de Oliveira». Moreover, he refuted the attacks of various authors against the Memoirs – a proof that he was in fact the author!

A HYPOTHESIS TOO QUICKLY FORGOTTEN! A simple reading of the Memoirs is enough to show the absurdity of the rationalist thesis. The accounts are filled with descriptions, names and precise events that all assume a perfect knowledge of Aljustrel in 1917. The only possible author is certainly a woman who was intimately familiar with the life of the village between 1913 and 1921!

Moreover, it is so evident that Lucy is the true author of the Memoirs that G. de Sede himself, forgetting his arbitrary hypothesis on several occasions, lets slip from his pen phrases such as these: «In her Memoirs written in 1937 (sic), Lucy herself unintentionally informs us on this subject... Lucy then describes for us the effects of these recommendations on Jacinta...»⁸⁴⁸ Again: «As Lucy herself revealed a good twenty years later...», and he quotes a long passage from the Memoirs...⁸⁴⁹ It is obvious that the Galamba hypothesis does not have the least consistency – a new fact that the rationalist thesis leaves unexplained!

III. WHERE IS THE FRAUD?

The work of our rationalist author is not only devoid of any historical value, and incapable of seriously explaining the most certain facts, it also reveals itself to be a tissue of lies and a work of exceptionally bad faith. The sentiments of the author do not interest us. What is important is to show that *this bad faith, these lies, these calumnies are an integral part of the thesis of fraud, which without them cannot even be presented with the least appearance of seriousness*. The most telling arguments, which will most surely shake the confidence of the readers in Fatima and engender suspicion, are precisely the enormous lies which ridicule and tarnish the reputations of all the witnesses of the facts, and undermine the credibility one would otherwise give them.

THE OLD ANTICLERICAL PREJUDICES. Let us say nothing of the old anti-Christian prejudices faithfully preserved by our author in the first part of his work, *Fatima before Fatima*. For to destroy Fatima, de Sede understood that one must reject the whole Catholic doctrine on Mary. This he does using the scraps of a Protestant and rationalist exegesis almost a century old. For example: the

four Gospels «were written between 98 and 145 A.D.... Luke wrote around 120 and Matthew around 145».⁸⁵⁰ What contemporary exegete, even Protestant or atheist, would still dare to maintain such a fantastic chronology, since the most recent and reliable findings prove, on the contrary, that the whole New Testament was written within a generation, before the fall of Jerusalem? The Anglican John Robinson wrote in 1980: «My personal opinion is that we must speak of a period between 47 and 70.»⁸⁵¹ But the science of Gerard de Sede is still at the level of Guignebert (A manual of the ancient history of Christianity, 1906!)

Of course, Fatima forms one body with the great Marian apparitions of the nineteenth century, from rue du Bac to Pontmain, Lourdes and La Salette. De Sede pretends to demystify them under the provocative title: *The French Forerunners of Fatima* (Chapter III). Everywhere the scenario is the same: «the choice of illiterate children in a rural environment with strong magical traditions (sic), and immediate claustration of the seers.»⁸⁵² Inexactitudes, deception, systematic malevolence – such are the rules of his method. A whole book would be necessary to re-establish the truth on all the points touched on by the author⁸⁵³ – but let us stick with Fatima.

Here are some examples chosen from among a hundred possible ones, drawn from a superabundant dossier.

THE THREE SEERS CALUMNIATED

LUCY? AN INCOMPETENT. According to de Sede, Lucy was not able to write her Memoirs herself, because she was so silly. The argument to prove it is drawn from Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 209. Here is de Sede's version: «Later on, at the convent, they will give up on making her pass her exams and will content themselves with teaching her housework, embroidering and a little typing.»⁸⁵⁴ The point is that Lucy was incapable of learning. Now here is the source text: the bishop, to try her humility, «asked her never to reveal her name until ordered to do so, and never to speak to anyone about Fatima... In fact, Lucy will succeed by a true miracle of humility, obedience, and... of spirit, in completely concealing her identity», and this for almost thirteen years. «She was successful enough in her studies: *but she was not presented for exams, to avoid revealing her identity*. In addition to the usual subjects, she learned the practical work of housekeeping, embroidery, typing, etc.»⁸⁵⁵ This is how anti-Fatima history is written!

“THREE STUBBORN AND STUPID FACES”. «The three children could neither read nor write, and a photograph of them, taken by an amateur the day after the apparitions, is eloquent: it shows us *three stubborn and stupid faces*. This is why they quickly substituted for this hastily done disaster a retouched photograph, for which the three children posed in their folk costumes: the little girls are covered in a shawl, and the boy has a little Portuguese cap. Later on *they* will transform this photo into a photomontage of the apparition, with little lambs and the Virgin appearing on the holm oak...»⁸⁵⁶ In an appendix, the three photos are reproduced under the title: *Contribution of Photography in the Elaboration of the Myth of Fatima*.⁸⁵⁷

What is the truth? The only photo he declares authentic is that of an amateur, Mario Godinho, taken on July 13. The children, who had just had the vision of hell, appear sad and frightened.⁸⁵⁸ As for the trick photo of the Virgin visible in the midst of the children, it is clearly only a pious image, and never did anyone claim it was a photograph of the apparitions! There is nothing there to deceive us... any more than in the hideous postcard that G. de Sede chose to reproduce on the cover of his book. That one has “doctored photo” written all over it!

That leaves the admirable photo on page 265. De Sede adds the perfidious caption: «The three children became stars and their photo, posed for and *retouched*, appears in the press.» Here we have to denounce the most shameless calumny. Just as “*they*” fabricated the photomontage of the apparition, “*they*” retouched the photo, G. de Sede accuses, leading us to believe that “*they*” evidently refers to the same persons. Yet he is careful not to say what retouches were made. Above all he is careful not to name who “*they*” are that contributed so powerfully to the «elaboration of the myth». Here is the truth that he is careful to hide: the incomparable photo was taken by the journalist of *O Seculo*, and published in the issue of October 15, 1917. Why should we suspect that the liberal and masonic journal so generously came to the aid of the clerical fraud? The authenticity of the photo is unquestionable.

Another stupefying example of a false accusation:

“HOW THE ACTORS LEFT THE SCENE”

This chapter is a choice example of bad faith, replete with lies and contradictions.⁸⁵⁹ When Francisco and then Jacinta died, the freemasons and

enemies of Fatima said: «It was necessary to cause the disappearance of these little children, who otherwise would have ended up exposing the fraud.»

De Sede does not pass up this argument: it was the parish priest and dean of Olival (the author of the messages!) who knowingly imposed «inhuman privations» on the children, to lead them to their death more quickly and get rid of troublesome witnesses. He then describes at great length the sacrifices the children made at the instigation of the dean of Olival. «Our Lord wishes us to do everything that Father tells us.» Thus did Lucy encourage poor, exhausted Jacinta always to make more sacrifices. One can only conclude with the freemason Tomas da Fonseca «who in no way exaggerates», opines de Sede, when he writes concerning the parish priest of Olival: «By his actions and his counsels, he must have greatly contributed to sending these children to the grave, a safer solution than the convent where they would have had to be enclosed if they did not go to Heaven first. Jacinta preferred this solution, or was made to prefer it, as has often been said.»

The audacity of the lie and bad faith surpass all bounds. While giving long quotations from the Memoirs, our “historian” has simply replaced with an ellipsis (that is three dots ...) the passage where Lucy explains that it was precisely the dean of Olival who moderated them in their penances, forbidding the ailing Jacinta to get up at night to pray! But of course he keeps the recommendation of Lucy to her cousin, the meaning of which is turned totally upside-down: «Our Lord wishes us to do everything Father told us.» We have to be aware of his own desperate thesis, which cannot be honestly sustained, to see why he must have recourse to such a dishonourable procedure! Note also the flagrant incoherence. G. de Sede affirms elsewhere that these famous penances that drove the seers to their deaths were pure inventions... made up much later «to fatten the dossier destined for their beatification».⁸⁶⁰ It was all made up by Canon Galamba.⁸⁶¹ Against Fatima, all arguments are good, even the most contradictory!

“AN ILLEGAL SEQUESTRATION”. Another example of perfidious calumny, brazen lies and doctoring of references is in the same chapter, where he describes the departure of Lucy for Asilo de Vilar. After accusing the clergy of provoking the death of Jacinta and Francisco, he now accuses them of getting rid of Lucy by an illegal sequestration. «As for Lucy, she was not left free to manufacture prophecies for very long. In 1921, when she had reached the dangerous age of fourteen, it was judged prudent to enclose the unpredictable impulses of puberty

within four walls. Bishop Correia da Silva had her enclosed, with a false identity, in a modest convent boarding school of Porto, at Vilar. It was wise to give her an assumed name, for it was an illegal sequestration: the child was a minor and had just lost her father and mother, and thus only the public authority was competent to provide for her education... At the age of eighteen, again in secret, and illegally, she was transferred to Spain.»⁸⁶²

This leads us to think that the lie is the first and unique principle of anti-Fatima history. Gerard de Sede is so sure of himself that he even has the gall to name his source: *Fatima 1917-1968*, pages 208-9. With such a reference, the calumny will take on the appearance of unquestionable truth! But what does Barthas say on the pages cited? «The decision for Lucy to leave had been made at the suggestion of the Bishop of Leiria, with the consent of *her mother*, the new parish priest of Fatima and the seer herself.» So Lucy was not completely an orphan! Where could de Sede have read that Lucy's mother was already dead in 1921? Nowhere does Barthas say that. De Sede attributes this enormous blunder to Canon Formigao... with a reference to the book by Barthas!⁸⁶³ Here is yet another example of the lengths he will go to dishonour an author and the cause he maintains.

The truth is that Lucy's mother died in 1942. Lucy left for Asilo de Vilar with her full consent. Maria Rosa even accompanied her daughter for part of the way. To a sectarian official who inquired where Lucy was going, her mother replied sharply: «She is going where I want her to be and that is all you will find out!» So much for “forced and illegal sequestration”!

A SIGNIFICANT LIE. It must be added that this enormous lie is very significant. G. de Sede would be right... if there had never been any miracles at Fatima. For it was in fact Lucy's prayer at the Cova da Iria which miraculously saved her mother when she was at the point of death, overwhelmed by increasingly frequent heart failures. The astonishing story is found in the *Memoirs of Sister Lucy*. «In any case, her mother had no more heart attacks until her death, in 1942.»⁸⁶⁴ These are historical facts concerning which G. de Sede could have interrogated numerous witnesses still living in Aljustrel.

Our author did well to inform us that he wished his work to be «a scientific and critical history which gathers and analyses all the documentation, with a rigorously exact method...»⁸⁶⁵

MIRACLES DO NOT EXIST

There is another series of facts that our anti-Fatima author almost totally ignores. These are all the phenomena for which honest scientific criticism has *determined* that there is no adequate natural cause, and at once recognizes the miracle. However, in the name of Reason it has been decided once and for all: miracles do not exist! To deny them, the method is simple: it is enough to ignore the facts, or to mention them only with a mordant irony.

THE MIRACULOUS HEALINGS. In twelve lines, everything is dismissed: «The miracle-working reputation of Fatima is much less solidly established than that of Lourdes. In spite of my insistence, I was not able to see Mrs. Maria Manuela Nunes Monteiro Teixeira Bastos, the wife of a retired naval commander, who was cured of a persistent lack of appetite at Fatima in 1942. Without neglecting such modest miracles, which are scrupulously noted down in the columns of the *Voz de Fatima*, the directors of the sanctuary are fond of claiming that at Fatima they attach less importance to relieving the body than to forming souls, which is much more noble.»⁸⁶⁶ Granted, he can turn a phrase quite ably. But from the scientific point of view his statements are a joke. Gerard de Sede at least could have read the accounts furnished by Canon Barthas on this question: *Fatima 1917-1968*, (p. 297-301). In *Fatima, Unprecedented Miracle*, the same author devotes an entire chapter to “miraculous healings” (p. 211-230). If he had wished to handle the question seriously, he would have had to have refuted the work of Michel Agnellet, *Miracles at Fatima*, which uses the most solid historical method in the examination of witnesses and medical dossiers, retaining only the most obvious cases, where the proofs of extraordinary healing are unquestionable.⁸⁶⁷

“THE MIRACLE OF THE DOVES”. Here is another example of the clever but fanciful manner in which our anti-Fatima author eliminates miracles at any price. We will cite all the witnesses later on, but it must be noted that they are so abundant that Canon Barthas could devote a whole book to the subject: *The Doves of the Virgin*.⁸⁶⁸ All the facts related are contemporary. The author indicates the names of witnesses who are often very visible personalities, whose words can be verified quite easily.⁸⁶⁹ To deny these facts one would have to assert that a good fifty bishops and Cardinals are all liars. De Sede is careful not to give any references to this book. He handles the affair quite cleverly: he is the first to discover the deceit involved in this affair of the doves, who came *spontaneously* to place themselves at the feet of Our Lady during Her worldwide

peregrinations; and he publishes a sensational photo which exposes the fraud. During Her world-wide tour by plane, «the statue of the Virgin of Fatima was accompanied by doves, trained to place themselves at her feet. These doves are seen here in the baggage-hold.»⁸⁷⁰

How did our investigator succeed in eluding the surveillance of the clergy to obtain this decisive photo? He does not indicate the source. We have discovered it anyway: it is simply taken from the work of Canon Barthas, *The Doves of the Virgin*, (p. 126)! Among dozens of photos and hundreds of witnesses, Barthas relates how the, faithful, having offered some doves in Italy (in no way trained to place themselves at the Virgin's feet!), wanted them to follow the statue to Portugal, hence their presence in the plane. Two of these doves, chosen from among the most beautiful ones to follow Our Lady during Her tour of Italy, were put in a cage to be offered later on to the Holy Father. The cage is pictured in the photo.⁸⁷¹ If it had been a fraud, Barthas would not have published this photo himself. Our anti-Fatima writer, who is well aware of this, is careful to camouflage their origin.

THE MIRACLE OF THE SUN. We Will have to close this refutation, which could be prolonged indefinitely, with a final example which demonstrates the total collapse of the adversaries of Fatima before the most certain facts. What does G. de Sede say about the famous Miracle of the Sun of October 13, 1917? Once again the procedure used is eloquent. The reader's attention is drawn to another terrain, making the reader forget all the essential points.

Thus Gerard de Sede uses four pages of appendices, as well as three pages of text,⁸⁷² along with photographs, to rigorously demonstrate that two photographs of the solar miracle presented as authentic by *l'Osservatore Romano* on November 18, 1951, were recognized as unquestionably false by the same organ of the Vatican on March 13, 1952. Gerard de Sede rambles on, insistent on this point, as if the reality of the solar miracle depended exclusively on these two photographs published in 1951! It is obvious that they have no importance, and the journalist of *l'Osservatore Romano* had no choice but to realize that he had been duped. But that proves nothing about the event of October 13, 1917, for which the testimonies of 70,000 people amply suffice!

In his triumphant irony,⁸⁷³ the author hopes to make the reader forget the three miserable pages (yes – only three pages as opposed to the seven dedicated to the business of the photos!) where he deals with the only events that are of any real

importance: the solar phenomenon itself. «From this mistaken expectation, and the curious games played by the light, which one can sometimes observe in an atmosphere saturated with humidity when the clouds move rapidly, was born the collective vision of the “dance of the sun”. There is no need to go on at length about this incident (sic!), since on that day no observatory noted the slightest exceptional solar phenomenon (there is precisely the whole problem!)... In compensation for not being present at the promised apparition of the Holy Family, many people affirmed that they had seen the sun change its colour and dance, in defiance of the inflexible laws of the celestial movements.»⁸⁷⁴

The embarrassment of the author is obvious, and for anyone who has read the accounts given by numerous unimpeachable witnesses of the event, the explanations suggested are ludicrous: to say that seventy thousand people, disappointed at not having been present at the apparition, affirmed “in compensation” that they saw the unheard of spectacle is ludicrous! Did they merely “affirm” that they saw the sun dance, without having seen anything? In this case they are all liars! But that would be ignoring the most certain facts: in this immense crowd, there was a large proportion of curious people, sceptics, and fanatical unbelievers, who, far from being disappointed at not seeing anything, would have been delighted had the hour gone by without anything happening!

The prodigious, unheard of and inexplicable fact is that even the unbelievers saw like everybody else the astonishing spectacle that we will describe at length. The ironically intended, reassuring considerations about “the inflexible laws of the celestial movements”, and the fact that no observatory noted the phenomenon ring false, for the miracle lies elsewhere: in the simple fact that seventy thousand perfectly credible witnesses *saw, with their own eyes*, on that day a grandiose spectacle, perfectly unimaginable until then. Our anti-Fatima writer is not capable of uttering the first word of a plausible natural explanation for this fact.

CONCLUSION

«PROOF BY THE ABSURD»

Somehow, Gerard de Sede has the audacity to attribute to himself, in conclusion, this honourable *satisfecit*: «I do not believe I have been lacking either in this respect (due to Christians), or in the exactitude one may expect from a historian,

in showing that the apparitions at Fatima, like all those that preceded and inspire them, admit of a natural explanation...»⁸⁷⁵

“THE RIGOROUS EXACTITUDE OF A HISTORIAN”? We have already seen “the exactitude” of the historical method used by our author! Father Alonso, in a brief article devoted to him, in spite of his usual benevolence, is constrained to judge this work severely: «The reader familiar with the historical method will see that, in spite of his pretensions to don the noble gown of a historian, the author never goes beyond the style of a bad, obnoxious and opportunistic journalist.»⁸⁷⁶ He denounces the «many gross historical errors» in this work. He cites twenty, and adds: «If we were to cite all of them, we would never finish.» So true is this affirmation that, for the most part, the errors he cites are in addition to the ones we have already pointed out.

A SYMPATHETIC INVESTIGATION? Gerard de Sede pats himself on the back for having conducted a serious investigation, inspired by benevolence and “respect for Christians”. The truth is that all the people well disposed towards Fatima who, in good faith, agreed to answer his questions were duped by an unscrupulous man. «Truly», Alonso deplores, «greater effrontery could hardly be imagined: first he provokes the interviewee, then he ridicules him...» The procedure is simple but dishonest, especially when de Sede adds the most infamous calumnies to quotations out of context. «Who», asks Father Alonso, «will defend before a jury the humble Maria of the Angels (the elder sister of Sister Lucy who at the time was still living at Aljustrel in the family house) from the injury done to her by Gerard de Sede in accusing her of “speaking only in exchange for remuneration”?» Alonso asks, «“Investigation of a fraud”, or “Fraud in a supposed investigation”?»

“NATURAL EXPLANATIONS”? All the natural explanations our author has presented to us to attempt to explain the apparitions of Fatima are nothing more than a tissue of inconsistent and incoherent absurdities. To formulate them, he had to unscrupulously ignore the most certain facts, distort others, and finally, to shamelessly make use of the habitual weapons of bad faith: doctoring of sources, boldface lies, perfidious calumnies, up and down the book... from Voltaire to Gerard de Sede, the rule has not changed: To “wipe out the infamy” everything is allowed: “Lie! Lie! Some of it will always stick!”

THE SYNTHESIS OF ANTI-FATIMA CRITICISM. This procedure is terribly effective on uninformed readers, but once the fraud is denounced, it rebounds

against the thesis the author professes to uphold. The remark is all the more applicable to this work by Gerard de Sede, since in spite of its enormous defects it is currently by far *the most clever and complete statement of the radical opposition to Fatima*. Father Alonso, who composed a whole work tracing «the history of the literature on Fatima», assures us: «We believe we are well acquainted with the bibliographical information on Fatima. We can affirm that this author has gathered in his book all the difficulties which for him contribute to making Fatima a fraud. We can even say that he has exhausted the theme. If we made a critical edition of it, we would be certain of having collected the principal themes of this school of authors, which derives its source from the anticlerical demagogy...»⁸⁷⁷ In short, it is «the synthesis», «the summary», «the summit» of everything rationalism could dig up, in seventy years, against the authenticity of the apparitions of Fatima.

FRAUD? AN OUTDATED HYPOTHESIS! Apart from this work, there is nothing. And if there is nothing, it is not for lack of interest or research of all kinds. It is simply because nothing else can be there, for all the impassioned *a priori* arguments in the world cannot replace the facts and documents. Today it is impossible for any honest historian familiar with the sources to continue to uphold the hypothesis that Fatima was a fraud. And we can be sure that this will be increasingly the case, especially since we have the critical works of Father Alonso, which eventually will be published in their totality. The change of tone in the articles of Father Laurentin from 1967 to 1982, going from scornful suspicion to an almost unhesitating recognition of authenticity, is very significant.⁸⁷⁸ This progressive rallying to a positive judgement on Fatima is proportional to a real knowledge of the facts.

“PROOF BY THE ABSURD”. Meanwhile, we see that Gerard de Sede has contributed his part (indeed in spite of himself!) to the apologetic of Fatima. The patent absurdity of all the “natural explanations” proposed leaves the field free... for the supernatural explanation. «Here then is everything our good “critics” have been able to find», writes Dom Jean-Nesmy. «Such inconceivable theories at least have the merit of making a true apparition of the Virgin almost natural and plausible by comparison!»⁸⁷⁹ Especially, we might add, since this hypothesis of a supernatural explanation does not demand that we avoid any fact, and needs neither deceit, nor lies, nor calumny, but only the great light of historical truth. In short, we can say that, following his masters da Fonseca, Alfaric and Ilharco, Gerard de Sede has made an indirect but important contribution to proving the supernatural origin of the events of Fatima – as Dom Jean-Nesmy put it so well,

it is the «proof by the absurd».

CHAPTER III

THE SOLUTION OF THE HISTORICAL CRITIQUE

THE TRUTH OF ALL OF FATIMA

The evidence on the apparitions and miracles of Fatima pose a fascinating problem for the critic. Whether the historians consider them credible or not, they are facts which must be explained. Yet, neither one of the two solutions we have just proposed is acceptable. The modernist explanation? It is fundamentally incoherent! The rationalist explanation of a fraud perpetrated by the clergy? It is unfounded, ridiculous and grotesque! Only one solution remains: that of the most serious historical criticism, concluding in favour of the perfect credibility of the witnesses, and thus the supernatural origin of the events of Fatima.

I. THE TRUTH OF FATIMA I

The truth of Fatima I is demonstrated by a threefold collection of mutually supporting proofs. *The negative proof* shows the impossibility of another solution, the inconsistency of all «natural explanations». *The positive proof* directly establishes the credibility of the witnesses. The reader will discover it for himself in all its persuasive force during the detailed account of the apparitions that we shall give. Here there are innumerable arguments which can be developed at will.

THE STRIKING POSITIVE PROOF. Let us recall just one fact, which alone is enough to decisively establish the authenticity of Fatima. Costa Brochado, one of the better historians of Fatima, explains very clearly: «Considered in the light of history, the events of Fatima do not depend on the three seers. It is not they who gave the events their historical character, but the unimpeachable witness of thousands of people. The astonishing solar phenomena of October 13, 1917, which we shall study, are historical realities which even the seers themselves could not contradict today, if by chance they could rise from the tomb to claim that they saw nothing.»⁸⁸⁰ This extraordinary historical event has only one explanation: the divine miracle confirming the authenticity of the apparitions, the day and hour of which had been announced three months in advance. Even Father Dhanis himself, in spite of all his prejudices, is obliged to agree with the

pro-Fatima historians on this point. The great solar phenomenon of October 13, 1917, whose undeniably miraculous character we shall establish, following in the footsteps of a plethora of authors, appears as *the founding miracle*, the major event on which rests our faith in the supernatural origins of the apparitions of 1917. It is to the events of Fatima what the miracle of the Resurrection of Christ is to the Gospel: the solid foundation of the whole edifice, the objective and certain historical fact that guarantees by its necessarily divine origin the authenticity of the Revelation indissolubly connected with it.

THE PROOF FROM COMPARISON. To these two proofs, G. de Sede's work suggests that we add a third, which is also quite conclusive and susceptible to ample developments – the proof from comparison. In his desperate research on everything that might contribute to discrediting Fatima, he devotes a chapter of his book to an account of false apparitions, which are presented as plagiarizing Fatima: *Fatima plagiarized, Ghiaie di Bonate et Vilar Chao*.⁸⁸¹ But these pages, even for the most ill-informed reader, will not produce the result hoped for by G. de Sede; quite the contrary. Thanks to the contrast, it can only cause the events of Fatima to shine forth all the more in their divine limpidity! Using the most superficial similarities, G. de Sede tries to draw a parallel between the false apparitions and Fatima. Yet, in spite of all his efforts, he cannot cover up the fact that the false apparitions are obvious frauds – or even diabolical imitations of Fatima.

In the two cases cited, as in many others, one discovers the pretence of trying to “improve on Fatima”, along with incongruous declarations that let us perceive the psychological derangement of the so-called seer.⁸⁸² At Bonate there was a «symbolic vision of the Church with some animals: the horse, the ass, the sheep and the dog. Suddenly the horse leaves the Church and goes off to pasture in a green meadow; St. Joseph leads it back to the Church, and, prostrating itself with the other animals, it prays.» (“A new Fatima: Bonate”, cited by de Sede.) That tells us quite enough! At Vilar Chao, in Portugal, the same fantastic episodes: the “stigmatist” «nourished herself exclusively on water and flower petals!» What a notion! When taken to the hospital of Coimbra and closely observed, the pretender could not stand up to forty-eight hours of a real fast, and the material she used to form her false stigmata was quickly discovered! Although the credulity of the people at times allows itself to be deceived, the Church knows how to blow the whistle, denounce the imposture, and put an end to the fraud. All the recent examples of spurious apparitions, perfidiously cooked up or exploited to distract us from the real ones and particularly Fatima, force us on

the contrary to recognize its incomparable clarity! No, Fatima has nothing to fear from a comparative study with the false apparitions not recognized by the Church, quite the contrary!

The long history of Marian apparitions for over a century only illustrates the prudent wisdom of the Church, which can discern with certitude the authentic divine manifestations that she recognizes and supports, from all their pathological counterfeits or diabolical imitations, which she untiringly unmasks and denounces.

THE CHURCH DECLARES FOR AUTHENTICITY. Relying on the facts of the most certain historical criticism, the Church firmly and authoritatively made her judgement on Fatima. Since the Bishop of Leiria gave his official recognition in 1930, Fatima has enjoyed a constant and unanimous approval of the world episcopate and the Popes, even when they procrastinated in fulfilling its requests.

Here is what Cardinal Cerejeira declared at Rome on February 11, 1967, perfectly expressing the judgement of the Catholic hierarchy on the events of Fatima: «No, Fatima is not ecclesiastical exploitation or superstitious ignorance; Fatima is a source of light and grace that the Immaculate Virgin wished to pour into the heart of Portugal...

«It is not the Church that imposed Fatima on the faithful, it is Fatima that imposed itself on the Church... In spite of the reservations of the Church and the obstinate, ridiculous opposition of those in power, Fatima continued to move the religious conscience of the country. Without the help of the Church and against the power of the State, the light of the miracle shone more and more brilliantly in the sky of Portugal, and the fire of the crowd's enthusiasm communicated itself to the entire country.

«... Fatima imposes itself by the evidence of a supernatural action which, I do not fear to affirm, cannot easily be equalled in the history of Marian interventions... In our times of materialist atheism, Fatima demonstrates to us in a striking manner that the supernatural world exists. Fatima proves it to us in a visible, tangible, unassailable and even crying fashion. Fatima annihilates the absurd and arbitrary negation of the supernatural, formulated in the name of reason and science...»⁸⁸³

This brilliant, radiant light of the apparitions of 1917 guarantees the authenticity of the whole message of Fatima II. Pope Pius XII, clearly alluding to the campaign of criticisms directed against Fatima, declared on May 8, 1950 to the directors of the Blue Army: «... The time for doubting Fatima has passed. Now is the time for action...»⁸⁸⁴

II. FATIMA II VICTORIOUS OVER CRITICISM

The thesis of Father Dhanis, which tries to cast suspicion and doubt on Fatima II, is untenable because it is incoherent, both from the theological and critical point of view, as we have shown at length. But it is also untenable because it is false in its very principle, resting entirely on an erroneous affirmation, and propped up by utterly worthless objections. This is what we will demonstrate now.

THE INITIAL ERROR: AN ILLUSORY DICHOTOMY

The whole structure of Father Dhanis' critique, as we have seen, rests on the totally unfounded and false distinction between the "old history" of Fatima, disseminated until the years 1938-1940, and the "new history", augmented from this time on by the addition of the Memoirs of Sister Lucy. From this undeniable and progressive growth in the diffusion of the message, Dhanis tried to conclude that there was a real, objective dichotomy.

We must say at the outset that in doing this, he committed a grave error in methodology and demonstrated a flagrant ignorance of the sources of the history of Fatima.

A GRAVE ERROR IN METHODOLOGY. In his studies, Father Dhanis, flouting the elementary laws of historical criticism, practically ignores a distinction of great importance. In the transmission of the message of Fatima (as with any historical fact) one can distinguish four successive stages:

1. First of all there is *the event* and *the first oral witnesses* which relate what happened. In this case it would be the responses of the children to the interrogations in 1917.
2. Then there are the *later oral testimonies* which are not to be neglected. Dhanis almost systematically ignores them.

3. Then comes the stage of *writing it down*. The writings of Sister Lucy, especially her versions of the events and letters to her confessors, are much more numerous than Dhanis imagined. Although they have long remained unpublished, for dating the appearance of a “new theme” in the message, they are completely reliable historical documents. Dhanis is oblivious to them.

4. Finally comes the moment of *publication*. In the case of Fatima, it was often quite late, due to the ecclesiastical authorities alone and against the will of the seer. We know that the publication of the secret and several essential themes of the message did not take place until 1940. The last part of the secret has still not been revealed.

Dhanis has constructed his whole system taking into consideration only the first and last stages! He opposes at will the testimonies of 1917... to the popularizing works of the 1940's, and concludes quite simply that there was a hiatus, a break in continuity which can only be explained by a later invention of all the new themes!

A FLAGRANT IGNORANCE OF THE SOURCES. If the apparent break in continuity, which appears real between the *interrogations* of 1917 and the *disclosure* of 1942, disappears when we consider the succession of intermediate testimony, the hypothesis of Father Dhanis loses its whole reason for existence. Now this is precisely the case.

The studies of Father Alonso,⁸⁸⁵ even as we await the appearance of his monumental critical work, already establish an uninterrupted chain of oral or written statements indicating that Lucy already knew and partially disclosed everything she is accused of having invented later on! The most demanding historical criticism can thus establish that the children received a secret in 1917, that they kept it carefully, and then revealed it little by little – according to the designs of Providence, as the theologian will say. In any case, the secret revealed in 1942 does indeed originate in 1917.

1. FROM THE PROMULGATION TO 1926 WITHOUT DISCONTINUITY. Here are some guideposts which will suffice to show how we can go back, without any interruption, from the themes published in 1942 to the first events and testimonies of 1915 and 1917, which are slim but real.

1942. It was only at this date that the authority of the hierarchy permitted the

publication of the Secret. The new themes were thus set out for the first time as a whole, in the works of Fathers Galamba, da Fonseca, and Moresco. But Sister Lucy, who already in 1927 had received the permission of Heaven to reveal the Secret, had not failed to develop one or another of its themes for the intention of her confessors, her bishop, or the Pope.

1941. Lucy writes down the third and fourth Memoirs, which constitute the whole of Fatima II.

1940. Sister Lucy writes to Pope Pius XII. In her letter she communicates to him the secret, and relates what happened in the complementary apparitions at Tuy and Pontevedra in 1925 and 1929.⁸⁸⁶

1938-1939. Sister Lucy writes several letters to her bishop, announcing that the war predicted in the secret is imminent, and already predicting that Portugal would be spared.⁸⁸⁷

1937. Letter of the Bishop of Leiria to Pope Pius XI, requesting on Lucy's behalf the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Sister Lucy writes down her second Memoir, where she relates the apparitions of the Angel and speaks of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

1935. In her first Memoir, Lucy already alludes to passages of the Secret concerning the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

From 1929 to 1936. Numerous documents relate the apparitions of Tuy and Pontevedra, which constitute the whole essence of Fatima II in close connection with the Secret.

1927. Lucy receives the permission of Heaven to reveal the first two parts of the Secret. She writes them down twice at the direction of her confessors.

Here is a fact of capital importance: the Secret was already written down in 1927! Although Lucy had to burn the text almost immediately by order of her confessors, the fact is no less certain. Regarding Father Dhanis, Lucy declared in 1946: «this Jesuit Father can write to my confessors, to ask them what I communicated to them in 1927; they are Fathers José da Silva Aparicio and José Bernardo Gonçalves.» When asked: «To whom else did you reveal the secret before the war?» she answered: «To the Provincial Superior, to the Bishop of

Leiria, and to Canon Galamba.»⁸⁸⁸

Father Dhanis was careful not to verify this testimony with his colleagues, who were Jesuits like him and still living at the time! But we must go back even further.

1925-1926. Several letters of Lucy to her confessors relate the apparition of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Pontevedra, with the request for the communion of reparation on First Saturdays, which is already an essential part of the Secret.

The first conclusion: Numerous documents prove that at least from the years 1925-1929, Lucy is already in full possession of the whole of “Fatima II”. Thus the supposed hiatus is sharply reduced. If the message was not divulged earlier, the responsibility rests entirely on the authorities to whom Lucy was submitted by religious obedience, and not with herself.

2. DEFINITE EVIDENCE OF A WELL KEPT SECRET (1917-1926). For the preceding period on the other hand, from 1917 to 1926, since Heaven had not yet permitted disclosure of the message in all its fullness, it is certain that the seers were bound to a more rigorous silence. The documents are more scarce. However, although we discover no explicit revelation of the themes that remained secret, we still find precious indications which, once the entire message was revealed, necessarily imply that the seers were aware of them at this time.

1924. The interrogation of Lucy for the canonical process clearly affirms the existence of a secret not yet revealed. There is evidence of the apparitions of the Angel, which were still a secret at that time. We know that Lucy was tormented with a crisis of scruples because she had vowed to tell everything, except the secret, and yet of her own accord she kept «certain things» to herself. How could she have experienced such scruples if she had imagined all that in 1937!⁸⁸⁹

1921-1922. A serious investigation by Canon S. dos Reis established that Lucy had already taught the prayers of the Angel to one of her companions of Asilo de Vilar.⁸⁹⁰ Father Alonso, having interrogated Lucy’s friend anew, «took down the same testimony in the most critical manner»⁸⁹¹. These prayers already contain a reference to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Undoubtedly, it was also about this time that Lucy told Bishop da Silva about the

apparitions of the Angel.⁸⁹²

1920. During her sickness, Jacinta confided many things, especially to Mother Godinho, which already call to mind several themes of the Secret: a prophecy of wars and chastisements, the haunting thought of hell, and the necessity of reparation. «We have documents written shortly after the death of Jacinta.»⁸⁹³

1917. In September or October, Lucy had mentioned the apparitions of the Angel to Canon Formigao, who told Canon Barthas about them. Moreover, «since the time of the apparitions, the parents of the little seers knew that they recited a certain formula that they called “Prayer of the Angel”, without knowing who had taught it to them.»⁸⁹⁴

Let us add finally, in response to the unjustified suspicions of Father Dhanis, that the first appearances of the Angel in 1915 were known immediately. The little companions of Lucy had mentioned them to people in the village. In 1917, Canon Formigao knew about them. Teresa and Maria Rosa Matias, and Maria Justina, when interrogated by Father Kondor, confirmed Lucy’s testimony.⁸⁹⁵

3. THE SECRET ANNOUNCED ALREADY IN 1917. While Dhanis is scandalized over the substantial augmentation of the message, there is one fact he is aware of, but which he practically overlooks: it is that *the existence of the secret* was revealed immediately, in July 1917. Thus Lucy could not have invented everything later on! There was at least this much, which the three seers did not cease to bear witness to later on, showing that it was always in their minds. This was moreover one cause of the rapid success of Fatima. Everybody wanted to question the seers to make them reveal the famous secret, trying to persuade them with caresses, fantastic promises, or terrifying threats. On this principal secret the three children, who we must not forget were only ten, nine and seven, kept the most complete silence, preferring even to die rather than disobey Our Lady when they were imprisoned by “the Tinsmith”, administrator of Vila Nova de Ourem.

There is serious evidence that even apart from the secret itself, which was imposed by the Virgin, the seers had not said everything about their apparitions. The parents of Jacinta and Francisco were well aware of it. Their mother Ti Olimpia observed, not without regret: «I don’t know what’s the matter with these children. When they are alone, they chatter like magpies, but when somebody comes near them they become so quiet you can’t get a word out of them.»⁸⁹⁶

Already Fatima I was announcing Fatima II in a veiled way. We are thus far from a total silence, from 1917 to 1942, imagined by Dhanis to support his thesis which aims, *a priori*, to reject the authenticity of the secret! «Faced with this chronological table», writes Father Alonso, «all the hypotheses imagined by the negative critic of Fatima crumble. The unfavourable judgements that rely on excessively late dates, are seen to lose their critical foundation. The chronological difficulty itself disappears. No longer is it a question of themes completely ignored until the writing of Sister Lucy's *Memoirs*. It is a question of themes pertaining to the Message of Fatima, which little by little are providentially uncovered.»⁸⁹⁷

If the principal objection, the one underlying all the others, finally proves to be without a foundation, what happens to all the others that form the indictment of the anti-Fatima critic?

WORTHLESS OBJECTIONS

When we examine in retrospect the list of objections constructed in detail by Father Dhanis against the authenticity of the message of Fatima, it makes us see clearly the emptiness of all *the objections drawn from internal criticism*. Let us review them very briefly. The more Father Dhanis' formulation of his criticisms is waffling and awkward, the more our response will be frank, clear and concise.

ILLUSORY CONTRADICTIONS.⁸⁹⁸ Regarding the month when the secret was revealed to the children (June or July), the contradiction is only so in appearance and not in fact, as we will see clearly: on June 13, the Virgin Mary again promised Heaven to the three little seers, and She announced that Jacinta and Francisco would die soon, while Lucy would remain on earth to «make the Immaculate Heart of Mary known and loved». Although Our Lady did not command them, the three children felt an impulse to keep this strictly personal prophecy secret.

On July 13, when Our Lady revealed to them the great secret properly speaking, ordering them to say nothing to anybody, they found in this message, the essence of which is the revelation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, an additional formal reason to keep silence on the vision of June 13 and the announcement of Lucy's mission, since they touch on the same theme of the Immaculate Heart. By revealing one they would have risked uncovering the other.

This sufficiently explains why, before everything was published, there was hesitation regarding the date the secret was revealed.

Another inconsistent contradiction: Yes, the Virgin did not reveal Her name, that is the title by which She desired to be invoked at Fatima until the apparition of October 13: «I am Our Lady of the Rosary.» This did not prevent the children from recognizing already in May who the Heavenly vision was: the Blessed Virgin! Nor did it prevent Our Lady from revealing, on June 13 and July 13, Her most intimate secret, Her Immaculate Heart. Must one be constantly on the lookout for supposed objections to find a “disturbing” contradiction in this fact?

ALLEGED “ERRORS” WHICH ARE NOT SO. Let us move on to more serious criticisms: Dhanis’ accusation that the message contains theological inaccuracies. In short, this is the issue:

Is the prayer to the Holy Trinity taught by the Angel faulty?⁸⁹⁹ Dhanis claims that it is, because, he says, «there can be no question of offering the Divinity Itself of Christ in reparation», and moreover, «it is debatable that we can offer the Divinity of Jesus Christ to the Most Holy Trinity»⁹⁰⁰. The objection disappears when we take the trouble to read attentively this marvellous prayer, which is remarkably profound. It is the whole prayer in its two parts, of offering and petition, which is addressed to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is no question of offering God only the divinity of Jesus Christ. The doctrinal reminder of all the realities presented in the Holy Eucharist, the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, indicates rather that it is the very Person of Jesus Christ, taken in His divine-human unity, that is offered in reparation: just as at Calvary and in the Mass, with which the faithful join themselves spiritually by this prayer. It has been said that this prayer is a formula of a “spiritual mass”, just as we speak of “spiritual communion”.

The most we can concede to Father Dhanis is that, with a good dose of acrimonious bad will, one could in fact give this very profound text some inexact interpretation. But for that matter the Gospel itself, the epistles, and the writings of the saints are full of analogous expressions, which our censors of Fatima would also have to denounce as «not entirely satisfying the demands of a precise theology»! Their impudence leads us to think that they will eventually do just that, measuring the divine words by their own supposedly precise theology! Common sense is on the side of Lucy, who, when told about the objection answered with a smile: «Perhaps the Angel was mistaken!»⁹⁰¹.

The “Prayer of the Angel” is also supposed to attribute “infinite merits” to Mary. Our good apostles of ecumenism exclaim: that is unacceptable and scandalous! If they had only reread the words of the Angel!... They would have realized that the infinite merits are those of the «*Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary*». As negligible as the merits of the Blessed . Virgin Mary are in the eyes of our reformers, when added to the infinite merits of Jesus, how could they make the latter lose... their infinity? But let us pass over these grievances, which can only be explained by haste and *a priori* jealousies.

The objections some have attempted to formulate against the vision of hell related by Lucy are no more solid. But the question is so important that we will return to it at length in our commentary on the secret.

DOUBTFUL PROPHECIES? Has anybody drawn attention to the fact that the two accusations made by Dhanis against the prophecies of the secret are mutually contradictory? We are told with a sneer: these are not true prophecies since they were not formulated until 1942, after the event. But on the other hand they denounce a gross error, which Father Dhanis by a tortuous argument tries to attribute to Lucy’s propensity for inventing things: she announced that the war would break out «in the reign of Pius XI». So! The secret, whose perfectly balanced structure manifests its unquestionable unity of composition was thus written under Pius XI and not in 1942, “post eventum”! Moreover the documents prove it. We shall cite them, and it will be obvious that Lucy indeed sounded the alarm, cried out with all her might concerning the imminent danger of the «horrible, horrible war», already in 1938. As for the apparent inaccuracy, «in the reign of Pius XI», we shall see what its double meaning is – one historical and the other hidden.

THE ERROR ON RUSSIA. There remains the most serious error, the only unforgivable one in the eyes of those who despise Fatima. This whole account of errors being spread by Russia, the principal cause of the Second World War, this bizarre request for the consecration of Russia alone... For the moment let us examine only the pertinence and impartiality of theological judgement shown by our detractor of Fatima.

On this point he is formal and speaks with authority, in the name of his science: «There is no need for long reflections to see that it is practically impossible for the Sovereign Pontiff to make such a consecration... This would render the consecration (of Russia alone) practically unrealizable... a moral impossibility»,

implying that the Most Holy Virgin could not have formulated such a request Herself. Our critic is so sure of this that he will repeat his judgement three times: in 1944, in 1945, and for the last time in the *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, in 1952.

On July 7 of the same year, a month after the article by Dhanis, Pope Pius XII in his apostolic letter *Sacro Vergente Anno*, accomplished this consecration of Russia and it alone, by name – so much for Dhanis declaring it impossible!⁹⁰²

Thus the flagrant, enormous error on the consecration of Russia was not the work of Sister Lucy but rather her censor, too opinionated and too inclined to confuse his political prejudices with the objective norms of theology. Although the act of Pius XII was incomplete, at least it proved in a striking manner that the request of the Secret contained nothing unsuitable, nothing utopian, nothing impossible... and therefore that the Blessed Virgin Mary could well have been the author.

These then are the imaginary difficulties and worthless objections constantly repeated by an impressive number of critics parroting Father Dhanis, against all of whom Fatima II is triumphantly resistant. The error lies with the opponents: they are mistaken in imagining that there is a real dichotomy between Fatima I and Fatima II. It does not exist. They are mistaken in raising against Fatima II objections of pure form, none of which will stand up to examination.

But something else is involved, of which the history of the controversy furnishes innumerable proofs – for such a series of errors cannot be attributed to ignorance alone.

BAD FAITH UNMASKED

From 1944 to 1982, through charity, weakness, or a secret connivance, the majority of authors that referred to the works of Father Dhanis, either to use them as a source or to firmly criticize them, thought themselves bound to pay tribute at least to his perfect good faith. And this, from Father da Fonseca to Father Alonso and to Father Laurentin, who could still write in May of 1982: «Dhanis wrote nothing out of hostility to Fatima, he assured me before his death, but out of concern to dispel the inextricable doubts and confusion that he saw but could not resolve.»⁹⁰³ A rapid survey of the controversy obliges us to say that

this statement does not correspond to reality. The facts are the facts, and for the honour of Fatima they should not be covered up. Dhanis combated the message for reasons other than the pure love of truth and with weapons other than those of an objective scientific criticism. If we insist on this point, it is because of the flagrant bad faith of the first, and in the final analysis, the only adversary of Fatima.

“TO ERR IS HUMAN”. We willingly recognize that his first studies, which appeared in 1944 and 1945, at least had the merit of presenting with all frankness and clarity, the specific critical problem raised by Fatima – the progressive growth of the message. With good reason he could be surprised and even scandalized by the important modifications made to the text of the great Secret by those authors who published it first. This mutilated text, presented by various writers in versions which notably differed among themselves, by that very fact lost a good part of its credibility.

The Belgian Jesuit also had another excuse, which he would not fail to invoke later on: «*The war which was raging at the time we wrote*, although it raised certain difficulties, nevertheless stimulated us to do a careful job, moved only by the desire of honouring the Most Holy Virgin in bringing out the truth on the subject of these apparitions. *Unfortunately, however, we were not able to consult personally the archives of the diocese of Leiria*, but we were able to use all the important works that had then appeared on Fatima...»⁹⁰⁴

Dhanis was perfectly aware of the inadequacy of his sources, for by his own admission he had to base his study on popularly oriented works, which were much more concerned with devotion than scientific criticism. Is it not astonishing that our professor at the Louvain dared, all the same, to uphold a thesis so contrary to his colleagues, especially Father da Fonseca? For Father da Fonseca was a Jesuit like himself, an eminent professor at the Biblical Institute, and also possessed the source texts to which he, Dhanis, did not have access.

“TO PERSEVERE IS DIABOLICAL”. It was especially in following years that Dhanis behaved in a curious manner for a man who, if we are to believe him, was motivated in this affair only by the love of the Most Holy Virgin and the desire to bring out the truth on the subject of the apparitions. In 1946, Father Jongen, a Dutch Montfort Father, informed Sister Lucy of the objections of Father Dhanis. All the responses of the seer were perfectly precise and clear. Above all, she provided the Fatima critic with a simple means of verifying

everything she said, indicating by name all the persons to whom she had revealed the contents of the great secret in 1927 and 1941. «This Jesuit Father», she said, «can write to my confessors, to ask them what I told them in 1927; they are Fathers José da Silva Aparicio and José Bernardo Gonçalves.» She then took the trouble to indicate their address in 1946. She also indicated the names of the superiors to whom she had made the same disclosures. Father Jongen then published in several Belgian reviews the account of this interview. Dhanis was surely aware of it... but he was careful not to ask for additional information from anybody! In any case, he never made any allusion to it in the future. This proves that he either never bothered to write to either of these witnesses, who alone could shed light on the “fabrication” of Sister Lucy, or that whatever they told him went completely contrary to his thesis. In either case, this casts a serious suspicion on his perfect good faith...

There is something even more serious. We know that the Bishop of Leiria invited him to «come to Fatima to study the facts and documents conserved in the archives, in the very context of the events».⁹⁰⁵ Yet he always refused! «Father Dhanis», writes Dom Jean-Nesmy, «never wished to come and study the documents on the spot, or to go to Coimbra to interrogate Sister Lucy himself. Thus he would not have to retract his own hypothesis, which a deeper historical investigation would have showed him was unjustified.»⁹⁰⁶ A strange attitude! The truth? He does not seem to have wanted to learn it. His mind was made up in advance, and he preferred not to inform himself so that he would never have to retract his position. And when the defenders of Fatima showed him his error with compelling arguments, he evaded the discussion...

THE REFUSAL TO ENTER INTO CONTROVERSY. Before giving the example of Father Dhanis himself, let us look at the remarkable case of one of his disciples, Cardinal Journet. In 1948 he published in his periodical entitled *Nova et Vetera*, and then in another magazine called *La Vie Spirituelle*, the nasty article we have already mentioned, filled with gross errors and injurious calumnies against the seer and the historians of Fatima, especially Canon Barthas. This article, a few pages long, was moreover devoid of all critical value.⁹⁰⁷ But when Canon Barthas demanded a chance to reply, it was refused him.⁹⁰⁸

Let us return to Father Dhanis. When in June 1952 he wanted to respond to the authoritative refutation of this thesis by Father da Fonseca, a response at once benevolent, conclusive and rich in new documents, he used the same

dishonourable procedure, adding to his text this note which says a great deal. It is attributed to the review itself: «Our collaborator shows that his thought was distorted in the study devoted to him. The *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* believes it is performing an equitable gesture and that it is serving the truth in welcoming this response; *it considers the debate closed.*» Father da Fonseca was not allowed to respond!

We could go on at length about the style of Father Dhanis' defence: smooth, evasive, underhanded and perfidious. Let us remark first that, when faced with the arguments, the unpublished documents cited by the Fatima specialist, our critic evades the issue and refuses all discussion on the important questions. He declares at the outset: «We have no intention of discussing this question here, which in our opinion is rather difficult.»⁹⁰⁹ But what is he talking about? Precisely the incoherence of his thesis, brought out by his colleague, and which we have exposed at length. In 1952, our Jesuit no longer had the courage to give a second helping of the stupid or frankly modernist responses he had dared to present in 1944!⁹¹⁰ He notes elsewhere, in passing: «The new evidence supplied by Father da Fonseca on the subject of the solar miracle is interesting, but *its examination does not fall within the scope of this article.*»⁹¹¹ Dhanis uses the same evasive remark on several occasions. In short, everything that would oblige him to admit his errors in black and white is conveniently thrown out on the pretext that it does not fall within the scope of his article! What then does he speak about in his twenty-seven page response? Something entirely different...

A MODERNIST HYPOCRISY. Dhanis responds to the criticisms of Father da Fonseca's article by avoiding the issue, as usual. He begins by saying, «We will present a clarification on the subject of our thought and our text.» From the beginning to the end of his response, he conveniently confines himself to this vein: he was misunderstood, misinterpreted and unjustly calumniated by his colleague. Coming to the end of his exercise in self-defence, he claims victory: «Almost no discussion, properly speaking, was necessary. It was enough for us to oppose the texts of our article to his attacks (sic): *they defend us quite well.*»⁹¹² No longer is it a question of the truth concerning Fatima, or even what his real thoughts are, which he could have tried to express more clearly... No, at issue is one thing: *his texts*. «They defend us quite well», he adds triumphantly... thus revealing something of his character... For he had foreseen the critique and prepared the response in his text itself. Does Father da Fonseca stigmatize his gross errors or unjustified calumnies with supporting proofs? Dhanis is content to retort maliciously: «But I didn't say that! Read over my text!» In fact, all his

affirmations, even the most obvious ones, are always prudently matched in his study with some discreet doubt, some carefully crafted formula which allows him – whether his assertions are founded or not – never to have to retract a single word of a text which is always faultless. Are examples needed?

In his first text of 1944, Dhanis favourably proposes the hypothesis that the seers imagined the apparitions of the Angel. In this context, he asked: «May we say that, at the moment the Angel gave the miraculous communion to the children, they had a *banal hallucination*?» Since Dhanis is careful not to respond clearly, this is what the reader is led to understand. Thus Otto Karrer, and Journet who writes: «Here Father Dhanis pronounces the words, “banal hallucination”.» And when Father da Fonseca refers in the same way to the thesis of Dhanis, but this time to refute it, the adversary of Fatima exclaims: «In reality, nowhere did we say that the little seers had a hallucination... We have posed a question on the subject of hallucination, we have not yet answered it... Nowhere did we affirm the “banal hallucination” of the children...»⁹¹³ As in his second study, Father Dhanis is careful never to quote from his most explicit texts, and the reader is led to believe that Father da Fonseca lied... or, as the Belgian Jesuit suggests, that his Portuguese colleague misunderstood him because of «the difficulty he experienced understanding the language our first study was written in». The Flemish language of the first little work «partly accounts for the errors» of Father da Fonseca.⁹¹⁴

As a matter of fact, Dhanis was unable to demonstrate a single error in translation on the part of his colleague. But what we must point out, because it is extremely significant, is that the adversary of Fatima had originally written his article... in French (!) and then deliberately translated it into Flemish, precisely to avoid too lively a reaction from readers familiar with the romance languages, which he feared, and undoubtedly also to provide himself with a convenient excuse: «You have misunderstood», «You have mistranslated»,⁹¹⁵ etc.

Here is another example of his long-winded style, designed so that his anti-Fatima friends would understand his meaning, while keeping the appearance of the critic's benevolent moderation for the suspicious authorities. At issue is the essential point: the theme of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the message of Fatima. We know that Dhanis claims that Sister Lucy added it later on. Here his writing is a masterpiece of consummate ambiguity, the perfidious duplicity of which borders on the grotesque: «The new theme of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is not presented in very reassuring circumstances.» This is the firm

conclusion of the exposé of Dhanis. But now, to reassure the pro-Fatima reader: «It is not impossible (sic) that the celestial apparition suggested recourse to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and even that it suggested (sic) the consecration (of what?) to this venerated Heart.» Does Dhanis accept as possible the authenticity of the theme of the Immaculate Heart of Mary? No, because the counterpart comes immediately: «But judging from the old history of Fatima, it seems completely unlikely that the visitor (sic) identified herself by speaking of this Heart as her own.»⁹¹⁶ As an example of the hypocritical camouflaging of his thought, we admit that we have never seen the like. Dhanis brings this up to show the total absence of this theme in the old history of Fatima. The reader will conclude, with him, that this theme, i.e. the Immaculate Heart of Mary, is inauthentic. But he does not dare to say it so crudely, attenuating his thought in a pro-Fatima sense... by an absurdity: “the visitor” spoke of the Immaculate Heart of Mary... but not as if it were her own! That is grotesque.

This subterfuge, however, permits our Jesuit to make his glib conclusion where he shows his devotion (?) to Our Lady of Fatima. And if you can believe it, he even greatly rejoiced in the decision of Pius XII to close the solemnities of the Holy Year in Fatima. He «shared in the holy joy of the pilgrims...» These last phrases, ambiguous to excess, fooled even good Canon Barthas, surely incapable of imagining such duplicity...⁹¹⁷ In fact, Dhanis does not retract anything he had said, and maintains his whole thesis intact: «The pilgrimage of Fatima presents itself with serious guarantees of originating from a merciful invention of the sweet Mother of God (this is only accepting Fatima I); it greatly contributes to spreading devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to which it seems (sic) bound for ever (Of course Dhanis omits specifying in just what respect! It is not in the history of the events but only in the pilgrimages, which endorsed the imaginary elaborations of Lucy); the Vicar of Our Lord Jesus Christ encourages it; it seems to us that one would be showing a strange self-sufficiency in spurning such a grace. We have already said so in our first article, and we are happy to conclude this article by repeating it.»⁹¹⁸ One last wink at his friends: Understand, he tells them, I am obliged to take precautions because of the Pope... but I am saying no more than in my first virulent study against Fatima.

Does it not remind us of «the insidious tactic» of the modernists, their «refined cleverness» that St. Pius X unmasked in *Pascendi*?⁹¹⁹

A COMPLETE DISAGREEMENT. Constrained by his superiors, no doubt at the instigation of Pius XII, to put an end to the discussion by a reassuring article,

Father Dhanis, crafty and sanctimonious as ever, remains faithful to his original thought. In fifteen pages of bland and colourless prose, we scarcely find any phrases that obstinately maintain the initial critiques. But they are there all the same, and those who can read between the lines will find them.

He declares at the very beginning of his “evaluation of a discussion”: «This controversy, although it demonstrated the existence of *some difficulties on secondary points*, nevertheless showed that *the essentials* of Fatima, and not only the essentials, can triumphantly sustain the ordeal of criticism.»⁹²⁰ Was Father Dhanis convinced by the vigorous refutation of his thesis by Father Veloso? This beginning would lead us to believe so... But let us entertain no illusions, for that would be underestimating the duplicity of our man. In 1952, he proclaimed that his disagreement with the historians of Fatima «did not concern the essential».⁹²¹

This is the ultimate sleight of hand, for he still has to specify where this essential or non-essential lies... For Dhanis, all of Fatima II which is summed up in the text of the secret, is precisely part of this accidental element, which is uncertain and of no importance. And in this final response, in vain shall we look for the slightest honest and clear retraction. On the contrary, he always claims imperturbably that his «preceding clarifications (sic) remain substantially intact».⁹²² He even defends his French translations, which weaken the meaning of his Flemish text, on the pretext that «they are not literal». He insinuates that the recent consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by the Pope – which in fact had just provided the most stinging rebuttal of his whole thesis! – in no way weakens his suspicions against the secret. One has to read this serpentine paragraph, which contains the perfidious insinuation: «The fact of the consecrations does not prove that in the eyes of the Holy Father the secret of Fatima, in all its parts, reproduces the words of the Most Holy Virgin...»⁹²³

And his final conclusion which, by its ironic tone, might lead us to believe that he had abandoned all his unjustified criticisms, formulates them once more, and more arbitrarily than ever: «On the supernatural origin of the apparitions, we are in accord with Father da Fonseca, just as we both recognize in the “Secret” written by Lucy in 1941 *an echo* (!) of what was supernaturally communicated in 1917.» At the very moment that he proclaims his agreement, by a single clever word Dhanis reintroduces his whole thesis! For he adds in a benign tone that the only little disagreement remaining is the following: while Father da Fonseca maintains that the secret was «very faithfully conserved», Dhanis still

thinks, just as in 1945 and for the same reasons, that the secret received «precisions added in all good faith *in a degree difficult to determine*».⁹²⁴ The text divulged is only a distant and deformed «echo». In other words, its content remains completely uncertain!

Let us quote this particularly ambiguous phrase, as a model of its genre: «... a consensus on this “secret”, which in some way existed from the beginning, is today in progress.» Go over the many meanings this phrase can have, and you will not find one which is fully satisfying... except this one, which corresponds to the most obvious interpretation of his whole article: the accord is purely an appearance, purely for form’s sake. At bottom the disagreement is and remains total and absolute, for although Dhanis is a clever and hypocritical adversary of Fatima, he is also a fierce and tenacious one.

“LARVATUS PRODEO”. As we have said, without ever retracting his first attacks of 1944, this wretched man continued to pontificate, always with his hand over his heart to swear his perfect sincerity – as though his sentiments could compensate for the total absence of proofs! – and his great devotion to Our Lady of Fatima (?). But what is even more serious is that all this time he allowed all those who quoted him as an authority to heap scorn, insults and perfidious calumnies on the seers, the apparitions, and the message of Fatima, without ever publishing the slightest correction to repudiate his extremist disciples. The latter, who after all were only expressing clearly what he had cleverly insinuated, claimed that they had totally destroyed the testimony of Sister Lucy, lining up specious objections against the message of Fatima. But never did their leader, who had launched the offensive and provided them with all their weapons, think for a moment of making any sort of restitution to those whom he and his disciples had harmed so gravely... Instead he confined himself to defending his own compromised reputation – and with such jealous care! – waiting until the time would come when he could express his theories openly and with impunity, influencing the decisions of the highest princes of the Church. This time did come... after 1960. But that is another story to which we shall return later.

“THERE MUST COME HERESIES”. Dom Jean-Nesmy is right in saying: «Father Dhanis did a great deal of harm to Fatima.» And he adds this remark, which is no less opportune: «But indirectly, he provoked the historical research, which on the contrary *confirmed the veracity of Lucy*. So the misfortune served some purpose!»⁹²⁵ In fact, without the underhanded attacks of Dhanis, would the Bishop of Fatima have thought of entrusting Father Alonso with the task of

preparing a great critical study which would publish, along with all the necessary scientific apparatus, all the documents on Fatima? Although the final result of this monumental work has not been published, all the partial publications that have been made and which surely give us the essential, already permit us to establish with greater certitude than ever, the full and entire truth of all of Fatima and particularly of Fatima II, concentrated and summed up in the secret of July 13, 1917. After showing the emptiness of the criticism, we shall still have to say a few words about it.

III. THE TRUTH OF FATIMA II

PERFECT HARMONY BETWEEN FATIMA I AND FATIMA II

The more the facts are studied in detail, the more surprising it is to see just how well the elements of Fatima II fit harmoniously into those of Fatima I. Just one example: the great secret reveals to us that on July 13 the children had *a vision of hell*. This text would not be written down until 1941, but how perfectly it fits in with the known events of 1917! The children related that day how Our Lady taught them a prayer concerning precisely the danger of hell: «O my Jesus, forgive us, deliver us from the fire of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need.» This prayer, the meaning of which was undoubtedly not grasped very well, was quickly corrected in a more traditional sense, and from then on, during the pilgrimages, they prayed for the souls in Purgatory. It was the disclosure of the vision of hell that gave the authentic formula, communicated at the very beginning, its whole significance.

On this same July 13, several witnesses remarked on the sudden fear and horror that took hold of Lucy, who suddenly cried out, her face livid with fear: «Aie! Our Lady! Aie Our Lady!»⁹²⁶ But nobody knew the reason for this terror, which only the secret would reveal later on. Such correlations cannot be invented!

This perfect concordance between the elements of a message, divulged at such different points in time – and for which several examples could be provided – cannot be explained except by a harmony pre-established... since 1917. This implies the unity of a message very rich in diverse elements, which were only gradually revealed. Fatima II reminds us of the missing pieces of a puzzle which, when found later on, fit quite naturally in their proper place in the whole, which until then was incomplete. But there is more.

FATIMA II SHEDS LIGHT ON FATIMA I. Many of the difficulties raised by the interrogations of the children in 1917 vanish entirely in the light of the new perspective of Fatima II. Now that we know the essential themes of the secret that the children were ordered to keep rigorously hidden, we can see that most of their hesitating or embarrassed replies touched on themes of the secret they were not allowed to reveal.

Thus the knowledge of the apparitions of the Angel resolved a contradiction that Lucy was accused of: «In all the interrogations she underwent, if she was asked: “Did you see the Blessed Virgin any other times before May 13?” she answered no. But if she was asked: “Did you have other apparitions before May 13?” she answered yes.»⁹²⁷ Lucy was accused of contradiction and bad faith. The knowledge of the apparitions of the Angel entirely resolves the difficulty, and underlines, on the contrary, her absolute honesty.

EVIDENCE ABOVE SUSPICION

“A TRIPLE CORD IS NOT QUICKLY BROKEN...”⁹²⁸ Once we reject as arbitrary the supposed opposition between the old and the more recent evidence, the credibility of the three seers becomes undeniable. The fact that they jealously kept their secret in no way permits us to suspect their sincerity or psychological equilibrium, quite the contrary.

«The apologists for Fatima, and already Father Formigao, proved by the facts that the little seers of Fatima enjoyed perfect mental and psychological health, removing any suspicion of mental illness or psychological trouble.»⁹²⁹ And to quote from a letter of Bishop da Silva recognizing the authenticity of the apparitions, the judgement of the bishop sums up a multitude of testimonies which all agree: «The little seers are humble country children, modestly clothed, unschooled, not even able to read, and having a rudimentary religious instruction. They are not nervous, but affable and affectionate in their rude simplicity. They love their family, obey their parents, and have a cheerful disposition...» (Letter *A Divina Providencia*, declaring the authenticity of the apparitions.) Such a collection of positive criteria cannot be mistaken.

IS ONE WITNESS NO BETTER THAN NONE AT ALL? After the death of Francisco in 1919, and then of Jacinta in 1920, Lucy remained alone. From this fact alone, Dhanis tries to draw an argument against the validity of her

testimony. «But the fact of there being only one witness», as Father Alonso justly points out, «is only suspect in history when deceit on his part can be proven, or when it can be proven that other witnesses were intentionally excluded. Many historical facts, even in Holy Scripture, have only one witness.»⁹³⁰ The rationalist criticism was quite stupid to reject all the events related only by St. John as the result of a fabrication on his part. We know now, by numerous archaeological proofs or cross-checks, that his Gospel gives us the most detailed and exact accounts of events. Shall we deny the authenticity of the apparitions of Paray-le-Monial or rue du Bac or Lourdes on the pretext that they all had only one witness?

Of the three initial witnesses at Fatima, the premature death of her two cousins resulted in Lucy being the only one able to explain a good many things. «But one of two things must happen», Father Alonso rightly continues. «*Either we believe what she says, or we absolutely give up on understanding Fatima.*»⁹³¹ In effect, accepting her witness allows us to understand the history of all the events, taking into account all the facts, even down to the tiniest evidence, while refusing to believe her, and moreover without any serious reason, inevitably results in the construction of a mass of incoherent hypotheses, which neglect several of the most certain facts.

THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE “MEMOIRS” OF SISTER LUCY. The internal criticism of all the writings of Sister Lucy leaves no doubt about the fidelity of her memory, which is really extraordinary. On reading her, might we feel that she relives intensely all the events that she relates? In the enormous mass of descriptions, conversations, and concrete details of all kinds that constitute the *Memoirs*, «an enlightened criticism will find only a few accidental errors of dates, facts, and circumstances.»⁹³² It should also be added that these texts were written under obedience, in all haste and in record time, without the seer having had the leisure to consult any previous document. And yet, her accounts often textually repeat expressions that she had already employed from the years 1917 -1922. A synoptic presentation of the first account of the apparitions drawn up in January 1922 with the three later accounts of the *Memoirs* would show this in a striking manner.⁹³³

Sister Lucy herself writes, with charming simplicity, at the end of her second Memoir: «Maybe someone will want to ask: How can you remember all this? How? I don't know. Our Dear Lord, who distributes His gifts as He thinks fit, has allotted to me this little portion – my memory. He alone knows why.» Here is

the answer, not without some irony, to those who would want to limit *a priori* the possibilities of her memory and presume to censor her on points they are ignorant of! Endowed with a certain naturally good memory, Sister Lucy explains that there is another, supernatural reason for the firm, precise memory she has retained of Fatima: «And besides, as far as I can see, there is this difference between natural and supernatural things: When we are talking to a mere creature, even while we are speaking, we tend to forget what is being said; whereas these supernatural things are even more deeply engraved on the soul, even as we are seeing and hearing them, so that it is not easy to forget them.»⁹³⁴ Elsewhere she writes, and how easy she is to understand! «... (supernatural things) are imprinted on the mind in such a way that it is almost impossible to forget them. At least, the meaning of what is made known is never forgotten, unless it be that God also wills that this too be forgotten.»⁹³⁵

THE TRUE MEANING OF HER “INSPIRATION”. In addition to her great natural ability and this indelible mark that such intense supernatural experiences leave on the soul, Lucy has often spoken of a sort of “inspiration” that assisted her very palpably whenever she had to write or say anything about the apparitions. Dhanis derides this claim, which he finds exorbitant. He even draws from it an argument against the perfect psychological equilibrium of the seer and the veracity of her words.

Is it not Dhanis instead who did not understand? For of course, Sister Lucy never said or thought that she was infallible! The few cases where she recognized that she made an error, expressed a doubt, or confessed her ignorance are enough to prove it. But that she was aware of a very special help that God granted her, when she had to relate her apparitions or the messages that the Blessed Virgin had communicated to her, precisely for her to transmit them, is nothing to be astonished about! The perfidious allusion to the analogous and illusory pretensions of Nietzsche, is a gross incongruity coming from the pen of our Jesuit! For never did Sister Lucy pretend to base the reality of her revelations on her intimate experience of being inspired from on high in order to express them in a faithful and adequate manner.

But once the authentic origin of the messages received is proven, is it not fully normal that, in order to pass them on, the seer should have benefited from an “inspiration” analogous, in its own order and keeping all due proportion, to that granted to the Apostles and Evangelists to pass on the unique and full Revelation, that of Jesus Christ the Word of God? There is nothing in this

affirmation that is not in complete harmony with the soundest theology. Father Alonso expresses it very well: «It is important to assume», he writes, «that if God used evident signs to make known His presence in the events of Fatima, He also intervened in a special manner so that “His” message... was faithfully passed on by the seers chosen for this end. It is something similar to what we say about the Church: if God entrusted her with a message of salvation, we must at least admit that he gave her a charism of truth for transmitting this message in an infallible manner.»⁹³⁶ In short, if the striking miracles of Fatima prove sufficiently that it is indeed the Queen of Heaven who spoke to us, we can be sure that She is powerful enough to also guarantee the exact transmission of Her great message of love and mercy.

CONCLUSION: THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE SECRET. Once we recognize with certainty the reality of the divine intervention, it is reasonable to think that the three seers benefited from a particular assistance of the Holy Spirit, inciting them to keep secret whatever was to remain so, inspiring them to speak at the hour willed by God, and finally enlightening their memory and intelligence to faithfully express the message received. Here the highest theological reflections square with the conclusions of the most detailed criticism of the documents: it is unjustifiable in the eyes of both the one and the other to maintain that Fatima II was the fruit of a later invention. No, the only plausible hypothesis, the only one perfectly verified, is indeed that there was a secret received in 1917 and exactly retained by the seer.

On this point Lucy has spoken formally. When Father Jongen interviewed her in 1946, echoing the objections of Dhanis, she answered firmly: «When I speak about the apparitions, I limit myself to giving the meaning of the words that I heard. On the other hand, when I write, I take pains to cite the words literally. *Thus I intended to write down the secret word for word.* – Are you certain of having kept it in your memory? – *I believe so.* – Then the words of the secret were quoted in the order they were communicated to you? – *Yes.*»⁹³⁷

This serene and firm response, which there is no serious reason for doubting, bears witness to the absolute authenticity of Fatima II and especially the great secret of July 13, 1917.

THE “DIVINE ECONOMY OF THE SECRET”

Before retracing the marvellous history of this incomparable message, before commenting on each of its words without any more doubts or misgivings, we must dispose of one last objection which we have not yet answered.

A COMMAND OF HEAVEN. The little seers, Dhanis claims, could not bear the burden of such a secret in future years... How could Lucy have kept the secret without alteration until 1941? It is inconceivable! To which we retort that Lucy wrote the secret for the first time in 1927, which notably diminishes the time of strict silence. This did not prevent Jacinta and Francisco from keeping a rigorous silence from 1917 to 1919 and 1920. After that Lucy kept silence until 1927. How was this possible?

The answer is quite simple. But since Dhanis had doubts about everything *a priori*, and for reasons having more to do with prejudice than criticism, it did not even enter into his mind. This is because this silence was an integral part of the great design of God. The Virgin Mary firmly imposed it on the children, and grace helped them to keep it faithfully. Yes, it must be said openly: if the essential message was kept secret for so long, it is because it was expressly willed by the Most Holy Virgin: «Tell this to no one. Francisco, yes, you may tell him.» (July 13, 1917) It is due to this formal order that the children were led to keep silence on the other elements of the message, without having received the command of Heaven, but only because they touched very closely on some themes of the secret, and would have provoked their disclosure before the proper time.

A SUPERNATURAL SILENCE. The long silence kept by the seers, which thus corresponded with a divine command of providence, had nothing stupefying or impossible about it. Sister Lucy herself explained many times how they could keep it for so long. First there was a natural help: the three children, and especially Lucy, were reserved by temperament. The first visions of the Angel in 1915 were for Lucy the occasion of insults and mockeries of all sorts on the part of those around her. This already moved her to keep silence wherever possible; she knew that it would cost her to speak. But it was the supernatural reasons which were decisive: the very nature of the apparitions moved them irresistibly to keep silence. For the apparitions of the Angel above all, Sister Lucy writes: «The presence of God made itself felt so intimately and intensely that we did not even venture to speak to one another... (This atmosphere) only gradually began to disappear. It did not occur to us to speak about this apparition, nor did we think of recommending that it be kept secret. The very apparition itself imposed

secrecy. It was so intimate that it was not easy to speak of it at all.»⁹³⁸

Even for the apparitions of Our Lady, which on the contrary filled them with a «communicative enthusiasm», «I felt an inspiration to keep quiet, especially on certain things», Sister Lucy writes.⁹³⁹ One would have to be in bad faith, or completely ignorant in these matters, to maintain with Father Dhanis that these reasons are not valid.⁹⁴⁰

AN EXACT OBEDIENCE. In addition to this supernatural impulse she felt inside her, Sister Lucy indicates to us the other reason for her silence, also supernatural but exterior: obedience. For the secret of July 13 there was the formal order of Our Lady; for the apparitions of the Angel and all the related themes, Lucy could only obey the orders and counsels of the priests to whom she confided herself, and who all recommended that she keep silence. «I have always obeyed», she could write to her bishop. «Firstly, I obeyed the interior inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and secondly, I obeyed the commands of those who spoke to me in His name. This very thing (silence) was the first order and counsel which God deigned to give me through Your Excellency.»⁹⁴¹

A HEROIC SILENCE. A silence of this kind, from which Dhanis strives in vain to draw an argument against Sister Lucy's credibility, testifies instead in her favour, in a striking manner. For to keep inviolate such an important and coveted secret, resisting for years the perpetual nuisance of insidious questions, shows an exceptional calm, self-mastery, and psychological equilibrium. Such a reserve, always measured by obedience, supposes a life completely absorbed in God, unceasingly following His movements; it demands heroic virtues, absolutely contrary to the defects which our critics would like to attribute to the seer: Did they ever see a mythomaniac, a "yarn-spinner", capable of keeping the fruit of her diseased imagination to herself for so many years? Certainly not! The false mystics give themselves away by their loquaciousness. They importune the world with their interminable "revelations" which they make known at any price and by all means, always finding someone credulous enough to give them a favourable hearing. It is prolixity and not silence that characterizes them.

On the contrary, the silence of Sister Lucy can only be explained by the aid of a supernatural force inclining her to it, a force more powerful than all external pressures. And God knows how strong they were! In effect, such a secret places the seer – even in the midst of a religious community – in an extreme loneliness of heart, unbearable for nature alone. Poor St. Bernadette, who could not reveal

her three secrets to anybody, even to her Mistress of Novices, underwent this cruel experience in her convent at Nevers.⁹⁴² Sister Lucy undoubtedly did not escape this hard trial, and overcame it for sixty-five years, waiting patiently for the goodwill of men to finally reveal the message of Our Lady. Yes, at Fatima the secret was indeed something willed by providence, and then permitted by God, to which the heroic and supernatural silence of the seers corresponds.

THE REASON FOR THE SECRET. One last question remains, which we must take a moment to answer: why this secrecy? What is the meaning of it? Why did God require it up to 1927, and permit it since... right up to today? We shall be able to provide the answer at the end of our long historical commentary on the very text of the great secret, for the passing of time now permits us to read, with amazement, the brilliant wisdom of the divine plan in the realization of events. Our task is to bring out this wisdom to dispel the natural surprise caused by this astonishing fact, wholly peculiar to Fatima: the most important part, the essential part of the message was not known until twenty-five years after it was revealed to the seers, and the most decisive secret still remains hidden from us, seventy years after the event.

To guess at why the divine plan arranged for its gradual unveiling, it is enough to imagine what would have happened if the little seers had immediately revealed the whole of the great secret immediately, on July 13, 1917. What would have happened? Its bewildering prophecies on the subject of a second world war, when the first one was not even over yet, its announcement of the deadly and worldwide role of Russia, which would have seemed extravagant, would surely have discredited the whole of the message and the apparitions, making their recognition impossible.

Thus God willed that Fatima impose itself on the Church the way that Lourdes did, by its miracles and by its message of prayer and penance, independently of its prophetic secret, only the existence of which was revealed at first. The cosmic miracles, the radiant sanctity of the seers, and the extraordinary fruitfulness of the pilgrimage, first had to shine forth and obtain the official recognition of the hierarchy.

At the moment when some of the events predicted began to be fulfilled, drawing the attention of the whole world, the secret could then be revealed with fruit. This is what happened around the years 1927-1930, when the whole West finally discovered, to its stupor, the horrors of Stalin's Gulag. Already partly fulfilled,

the secret could then be understood, and it kept the divine seal on the prophecy first of all by its origin – it had been revealed in 1917 – and then by the numerous events predicted that still concerned the future. Far from being absurd or baffling, it is then a marvel of divine wisdom that the secret was gradually revealed! Thanks to it, the great prophecies of Our Lady pronounced in 1917 were destined to illumine the whole history of our epoch, bringing a message of light and hope for each of the great stages of our century.

The secret of Fatima and the drama of its publication appear then under a twofold light, at the convergence of a twofold mystery: first the mystery of grace, by which God had foreseen and ordained the most opportune times for his revelation to effect the great work of salvation willed by him, and then the mystery of iniquity by which the Adversary succeeded in delaying its benefits, even for a time depriving the Church and humanity of it, leaving them endangered. By its prophetic secret, the publication and implementation of which were confided to the highest authority of the Church, Fatima dominates our whole century. This will be shown in our second volume, devoted to the *great Secret*, its fulfilment since 1917 and its integral content. This will be the most original and important part of our work.

BEYOND CRITICISM: THE GREAT LIGHT OF FATIMA

First of all we must draw all the lessons from our patient critical study necessary to reap all the fruits from it.

Yes, it cannot be denied: Fatima as a whole triumphantly sustains the twofold scrutiny of criticism; the violent and unscrupulous one of rationalism, and the insidious, perfidious one of modernism. None of their objections can stand up against an attentive examination of the sources; neither one or the other of their theories explaining the events is seriously tenable. They are absurd and grotesque, or fundamentally incoherent. Far from being founded on a scientific study of the documents, the obstinate opposition to the facts and the message in reality rests on a flagrant bad faith that we have had to denounce, both in Gerard de Sede and in Father Dhanis. Confronted with these vain attacks, the only solid solution remaining is the positive one which recognizes, after mature examination, the full and entire authenticity of the apparitions, and accepts the divine origin of the message in its integrity.

THE LIGHT OF TRUTH. After this preliminary study which at the beginning establishes our full confidence in the apparitions, our task becomes easy and supremely attractive: it is enough for us to step aside wherever possible to give as much attention as possible to the events of the apparitions, and to let the witnesses speak for themselves. But although we shall lay aside all unjustified or undue suspicions, we shall not therefore abandon all critical spirit. Here and there, we shall respond in detail to such and such an objection, left in abeyance. But above all it will be a simple matter for us to demonstrate the superabundance of solid proofs, which cause the luminous truth of the apparitions and the message to shine forth.

THE RADIANCE OF HEAVENLY BEAUTY. In a domain so vast and so often recounted as the history of the apparitions, a second perspective will guide us in the choice of episodes and witnesses: that of the beauty of Fatima, which shines brightly everywhere: the unspeakable beauty of the Apparitions of the Angel and the Queen of Heaven, the striking beauty of the cosmic miracles culminating in the marvellous spectacle of the dance of the sun, the hidden and secret beauty (but therefore all the more moving) of the pure and spontaneous, serious and heroic souls of the three seers, the beauty of their family, the beauty of their village and dear homeland, a country with a long and faithful record in Christendom. A shining light, a resplendent Beauty which makes us feel, as it were, a foretaste of Heaven.

THE FIRE OF CHARITY. To apologetics and mystical aesthetics, we do not fear to join devotion as well. Yes, for how could we relate them in a cold and indifferent manner without totally distorting these marvellous events, these burning words, by which the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary willed, in our century when the charity of the many has grown so cold, to revive the ardent flame of the love of God and salvation of souls? The fire which they came to light upon the earth, must it not give warmth to us also?

A HISTORY WHICH IS A MESSAGE AS WELL. The message of Fatima, as we have already said and as we will show, has nothing a-temporal about it. Ascetical and mystical, it is also prophetic, and as it sheds light on our history, it dominates and governs it. More than anything else, we shall come to see it as an apocalypse for our twentieth century. That being said, we must add on the other hand, that with Fatima as well as with the Gospel, *the story is also a message*. The events themselves and the life of the seers are radiant with the same divine brilliance as the words of Our Lady, they are the most vivid illustration of Our

Lady's words, and their happiest complement. In the history of the events at Fatima, everything speaks of and reveals to us the essence of the mystery: the secret of the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and Their divine predilections.

However, even before the choice of the little seers and their life, it is the *choice of their homeland* from among all nations, to accomplish in our century the great design of Our Lady, that occupies our attention. Clearly this choice was not the result of an absurd or capricious chance. Had not the Event of Fatima, foreseen in the plan of Providence, been prepared for many centuries? We shall discover with wondrous astonishment – for it has not been said enough – that the special and age-old benevolence of Heaven in favour of its “faithful nation”, already reveals to us, in the course of its eventful history, the good pleasure, the desires and the will of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, such as they will be revealed for the whole world at the Cova da Iria, on July 13, 1917.

May Our Lady deign to open our minds and our hearts to the light of Her mysterious Secret so rich in meaning, that it may enlighten us, and fill us with wonder and warmth!

Ave Maria! Veni Sancte Spiritus!

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- (1) S. Martins dos Reis, *Uma Vida ao serviço de Fatima*, Apêndice documental de ineditos, p. 297-393 (1973). See also Antonio Maria Martins, S.J., *Fatima, Documentos* (Porto 1976), and Cartas da Irma Lucia, p. 98-117 (Porto, 1979).
- (2) De Marchi, *Testimony* p. 66.
- (3) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 25-37. We have relied on this book for many facts in his historical overview. We have also followed the excellent article of the Portuguese Jesuit, Father José de Oliveira Dias: “Our Lady in Portuguese Popular Piety”, in *Maria, Etudes sur la Sainte Vierge*, Vol. IV, p. 611-646, Beauchesne 1956.
- (4) Dias, p. 614.
- (5) Barthas, *Fatima, Prodigy of the XXth Century*, p. 29-30.
- (6) Barthas, *Fatima, Unprecedented Miracle*, p. 22-23.
- (7) Dias, p. 615-616.
- (8) Ibid., p. 616.
- (9) De Sede, p. 99. The author refers to Father Martindale, *The Message of Fatima*, p. 13.
- (10) Cf. G. Goyau, *Missions and Missionaries*, p. 42-45, Bloud and Gay, 1931.
- (11) Dias, p. 616.
- (12) Goyau, p. 58-59.
- (13) Dias, p. 623.
- (14) In Vol. II, while we comment on the request for the consecration of Russia, we will also show what magnificent fruits the consecration of France to Our Lady produced in 1638.
- (15) Act of acclamation to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Patroness of Portugal, made by the Cortes of Lisbon in 1646. Quoted by Pius XII on May 13, 1946.
- (16) Dias, p. 642.
- (17) This decree was simply extending to all cities a venerable tradition that several of them had already practiced a long time.
- (18) *From the Grotto to the Holm Oak*, p. 181.
- (19) Dias, p. 625.
- (20) De Marchi, p 285.
- (21) *From the Grotto to the Holm Oak*, p. 37-45.
- (22) Finally, Canon Barthas points out a remarkable fact: «Our Lady wanted

the principal apostles of devotion to Her at Fatima to be two men who were fervently devoted to Her apparition at Lourdes: Bishop José da Silva and Canon Formigao.» The future Bishop of Leiria had already come to Lourdes twelve times, and after his consecration he returned there five more times. As for Canon Formigao, before finding out about Fatima he had thought about spreading devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes in Portugal.

(23) *Fatima a Prova*, p. 25-27, quoted by De Sede, p. 85.

(24) De Marchi, (Fr. Ed.) p. 66.

(25) Alonso, *History of the literature on Fatima*, 1967.

(26) IV, p. 123.

(27) IV, p. 122.

(28) II, p. 85.

(29) IV, p. 146.

(30) We quote the Memoirs in the English edition of Father Kondor, with annotations by Father Alonso. Occasionally we have corrected the translation. The roman numeral indicates the Memoir being quoted, and the arabic numeral gives the page number.

(31) Using these sources as well as the archives of Canon Barthas, Dom Jean-Nesmy gave us, in 1980, a well informed, clear and concise account of the apparitions, which can be found in the first part of his book, *The Truth About Fatima*. With unequalled psychological insight, he reconstructs the atmosphere of the village, as well as the character of the seers. We are very much indebted to him.

(32) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 32.

(33) It is a touching Portuguese custom to give at baptism, along with a saint's name, the patronage of Jesus or Mary in one of their mysteries: for example, "Lucy of Jesus", "Jacinta of Jesus", Maria of the Conception, of the Purification, of Sorrow (das Dores), etc, and now Lourdes or Fatima as well; cf. Barthas, p. 27.

(34) De Marchi, *Testimony on the Apparitions*, p. 176-177.

(35) De Marchi, p. 48.

(36) De Marchi, p. 18.

(37) Dom J.-Nesmy, p. 30.

(38) De Marchi, p. 176, 49.

(39) Dom J.-Nesmy, p. 31.

(40) II, p. 57.

(41) According to Maria dos Anjos: "Our mother could read printed matter, but she did not know how to write." (De Marchi, p. 53).

(42) II, p. 52.

(43) Dom J.-Nesmy, p. 31.

(44) For them, going to school was out of the question. Besides, until recently there had been no school at all.

(45) De Marchi, p. 81-82.

(46) De Marchi, p. 54.

(47) Canon Martins dos Reis, *Sintese Critica*, p. 38.

(48) De Marchi, p. 53-55.

(49) Cf. Dom J.-Nesmy, p. 35-36.

(50) II, p. 52.

(51) II, p. 53.

(52) De Marchi, p. 55.

(53) II, p. 65.

(54) II, p. 58.

(55) II, p. 53.

(56) De Marchi, p. 53.

(57) De Marchi, p. 50.

(58) De Marchi. p. 52.

(59) II, p. 53.

(60) We must point out that this unquestionable fact reduces to naught all the calumnies of G. de Sede against the seer. This indeed is the sure proof, both of her uncommon memory as well as her precocious intelligence and profound piety.

(61) II, p. 58.

(62) This year, in 1913, it coincided with the feast of the Sacred Heart. Good Father Pena was transferred shortly after (*Memorias e Cartas*, p. 465).

(63) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 35.

(64) II, 53-56.

(65) De Marchi. p. 51, 50.

(66) Quoted by Alonso, *Memoirs*, (Fr. Ed.), p. 14.

(67) I, p. 21.

(68) De Marchi, p. 64.

(69) I, p. 20-21.

(70) I, p. 22-23.

(71) I, p. 23.

(72) De Marchi, p. 64.

(73) I, p. 24-25.

(74) Dom Jean-Nesmy, p. 47.

(75) This portrait of Francisco is taken from the letter of Dr. Carlos Mendes to his fiancée, relating his visit to Fatima, on September 7, 1917. Cf. Barthas,

Fatima, Unprecedented Miracle. p. 321.

(76) IV, p. 124.

(77) IV, p. 124-125.

(78) De Marchi, p. 59.

(79) De Marchi, p. 61.

(80) De Marchi, p. 60.

(81) De Marchi, p. 61.

(82) IV, p. 143-144.

(83) IV, p. 124.

(84) IV, p. 126.

(85) IV, p. 149.

(86) I, p. 20.

(87) IV, p. 124.

(88) I, p. 21.

(89) I, p. 22.

(90) I, p. 20.

(91) I, p. 26.

(92) IV, p. 125.

(93) I, p. 26.

(94) I, p. 27.

(95) IV, p. 125.

(96) IV, p. 144.

(97) I, p. 27.

(98) IV, p. 126.

(99) De Marchi, (Orig.), p. 70.

(100) IV, p. 155.

(101) II, p. 59.

(102) IV, p. 155.

(103) II, p. 59-60.

(104) II, p. 59-60.

(105) To understand how inadequate this ambiguous notion is for giving a natural explanation of the apparitions of the Angel or Our Lady, or the dance of the sun, see the study of H. F. Ellenberger, *Psychoses Collectives*, which is an authoritative source on this matter. (Encyclopédie medico-chirurgicale, 1967).

(106) II, p. 60.

(107) When Lucy was interrogated on October 19, 1917, she was exhausted by the uninterrupted series of interrogations, and tried to elude the question. Then, embarrassed, she answered inexactly.

(108) IV, p. 155.

(109) II, p. 60.

(110) II, p. 60.

(111) IV, p. 155.

(112) She has given us two accounts of the apparitions of the Angel, one in the second Memoir, p. 60-65, and the other in the fourth, p. 154-158.

(113) *This blessed hollow*, or *Loca de Cabeço*, which Lucy sometimes calls the *Lapa*, is not a grotto. It is simply a tiny hollow surrounded by rocks and trees. "This hiding place is so well formed that it afforded an ideal protection from both the rain and the burning sun." (I, p. 37.) A beautiful set of sculptures was made there in memory of the last apparition of the Angel.

(114) II, p. 60-62; IV, p. 154-156.

(115) De Marchi, (Orig. Ed.) p. 66.

(116) According to Maria dos Anjos. (De Marchi, Fr. Ed.) p. 54.

(117) 1 Kg. 19:12.

(118) "Then I went back towards the grotto and began taking off my shoes", writes Bernadette. "Scarcely had I begun doing so when I heard a noise which sounded like a gust of wind. Then I turned my head to the side of the level ground (the side opposite the grotto). I saw that the trees did not move. Then, I continued taking off my shoes. *I heard the same noise again...* and as I looked towards the grotto, I saw a Lady in white." (Apparition of February 11, 1858).

(119) Lk. 1:12 & 30; Mt. 28:5.

(120) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 51.

(121) Here let us point out a slight contradiction, which no doubt only a more detailed interrogation of the seer would resolve in a completely *satisfactory* manner. Lucy indeed wrote in her second Memoir: "*I immediately recommended to my cousins to keep the secret and this time, thanks to God, they did as I wished.*" (II, p. 64, Fr. Ed.). Does Sister Lucy confuse this with the same recommendation to keep silence which she certainly made after the apparition of May 13? It is possible. It is also plausible that, when she explains with insistence that the Apparition itself imposed silence, and thus made any resolution in this vein superfluous, she forces her thought a bit, forgetting that at least the first time, she may have invited her cousins to keep quiet. See the interview with Father Jongen: "After the apparition of the Angel at the Cabeço, we decided to say nothing to anybody." (De Marchi, Orig., p. 342.)

(122) Sister Lucy to William Thomas Walsh, *Our Lady of Fatima*, p. 218.

(123) Recall the doctrine of St. Augustine on the mediation of the Angels in the theophanies of the Old Testament (*De Trinitate*, III, 11; cf. Acts 7:35, 38 & 53), or the impression of the holy stigmata impressed on St. Francis of Assisi by a Seraph.

(124) IV, p. 128, 158.

(125) p. 62.

(126) IV, p. 157-158.

(127) This is a cistern located at the bottom of the dos Santos garden called the *Arneiro*. Along with the *hollow of Cabeço*, “the well” was to become the favourite spot of the children, where they loved to gather to pray.

(128) IV, p. 156, and II, p. 62, 64.

(129) IV, p. 127-128.

(130) Once again it is at the “blessed hollow” of the Cabeço, where the Angel had appeared to them in the spring.

(131) II, p. 64-65, and IV, p. 156-157.

(132) IV, p. 128.

(133) IV, p. 128.

(134) IV, p. 156-157.

(135) II, p. 64.

(136) IV, p. 127.

(137) II, p. 65-66.

(138) II, p. 66.

(139) IV, p. 156.

(140) In May 1936, she had already written a first account, almost identical to the one found in the Memoirs, written for Father Gonçalves, her confessor (*Memorias e Cartas*, p. 457-461).

(141) Régine Pernoud, *Jeanne d’Arc par elle-même et par ses témoins*, p. 31.

(142) As the Angel says to St. John in the Apocalypse: “*Conservus tuus sum... Deum adora.*” (I am a fellow servant like you. Worship God.)

(143) IV, p. 156.

(144) In a beautiful prayer of St. Gertrude, we find the same offering of the Body, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ to the adorable Trinity, in reparation for all the sins of the world: “On the solemn feast of the Epiphany, following the example of the three Kings, this holy soul offered to God, in the form of myrrh, *the Body of Christ* with all His sufferings and all His passion. Through the merits of the Passion, for the glory of God she wished to wipe out the sins of all men, from the time of Adam until the last man. Likewise, instead of incense, she offered *the Soul of Christ*, full of devotion with all the acts of His spiritual life, to make up for the negligences of the whole universe. In the same way, again, in place of gold, she offered *the most perfect Divinity of Christ*, with all the delights It enjoys, to make up for the negligences of all creatures. The Lord appeared to her once more presenting this offering, as choice gifts, *to the ever adorable Trinity*. (*Le Héraut de l’Amour Divin*, book IV, chap. VI, p. 16).

Father Dhanis stressed that the Fatima prayer was inexact, and innovated dangerously by offering in reparation, not only the humanity of Christ, but also His Divinity. The great mystic of Helfta (in the thirteenth century!) was not of the same opinion. Nor was St. John Eudes, in whose writings we find many analogous formulas. And they at least had experienced what they were talking about! As for the cold Christology of Father Dhanis, which obscures the essential point of the mystery, that is, the personal and divine-human unity of the Incarnate Word, making the distinction between the two natures into a dichotomy, and virtually turning His humanity into a separate person – it is Nestorian in tendency and merits a good many reservations.

Let us quote only these few surprising lines: “The series of realities present under the holy species (the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus), do not correspond to what we can offer in the Eucharist...” According to Father Dhanis, it is only the humanity of Christ that we can offer to God. (cf. *Streven*, p. 145).

But in the Mass, is it not *Jesus Himself* who offers Himself to His Father, His minister only acting in His name, *in persona Christi*? And what He offers is not His abstracted human nature, but *His Sacrifice*, which is the supreme Act of His person as Incarnate Son of God and Redeemer.

(145) See, at the end of this chapter, Appendix II, “This is My Blood poured out for you.”

(146) In his decree, the holy Pope encouraged and even ordered the early communion of children. Until the thirteenth century in the West – and even today in the Eastern Rites – was it not a custom to give children the Eucharist under the species of wine, on the day of their baptism? After recalling this venerable custom, the Pope decreed that from then on children would be admitted to the holy Table beginning with the age of reason, “that is, about the age of seven, or a little later, *or even a little earlier*”, and made it clear that “a full and perfect knowledge of Christian doctrine was not necessary.” It was enough for the child to “be able to distinguish the Eucharistic bread from ordinary and corporeal bread, so as to approach the holy Table with the devotion befitting their age.” (Acts of St. Pius X, Doc. cath., t. V, p.258 sq.)

(147) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 51-52; Sister Lucy made a similar reply to William Thomas Walsh in *Our Lady of Fatima*, p. 218.

(148) Cf. Cerbelaud Salagnac, *Fatima et notre temps*, p. 49.

(149) We borrow these few historical facts from Canon Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, who sums up the long demonstration of Father Martins dos Reis, *Na Orbita*, p. 131-140.

(150) De Marchi, p.341 (Orig.).

(151) IV, p. 154.

- (152) De Marchi, p.341 (Orig.).
- (153) IV, p. 154.
- (154) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 50.
- (155) p. 49.
- (156) IV, p. 153, and again to Father Jongen or William Thomas Walsh.
- (157) This account is from Father Sebastiao Martins dos Reis (*Na Orbita de Fatima*, p. 128-129). Father J. M. Alonso quotes it in “El Corazon Immaculado de Maria”, p. 291 in *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, 1972.
- (158) *El Corazon Immaculado de Maria*, p. 291.
- (159) II, p. 62.
- (160) William Thomas Walsh, *Our Lady of Fatima*, p. 219.
- (161) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 50.
- (162) Régine Pernoud, *Jeanne d’Arc par elle-même et par ses Témoins*, p. 218, 204, 31.
- (163) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 341 (Orig.).
- (164) *Streven*, p. 139-140.
- (165) Cf. A. Poulain, *Des grâces d’oraison, traité de théologie mystique*, chap. XX, p. 293 sq. (1906); Msgr. A. Farges, *Les Phénomènes mystiques, traité de théologie mystique*, Vol. II, chap. I, p. 7-34 (Lethielleux, 1923).
- (166) The notion of “sensible vision”, although it expresses with exactness the extrinsic character of the Apparition, entirely loses *the miraculous and mysterious character of the objective supernatural fact and its perception*, especially since alongside the seers, other people saw nothing.
- On the other hand, it goes without saying that concrete cases, in their abundant richness and supernatural reality, do not fit in the narrow category of an abstract distinction. Thus Msgr. Farges notes, the three types of visions, far from excluding each other, can sometimes be combined in the same complex vision, which will be characterized and denominated by its dominant note.” (op. cit., p. 10)
- Although this distinction is sometimes delicate in its application, it is nevertheless true and enlightening. Many authors claim to dispense with it entirely, although they bring no new contribution to the question at all; they remain in the most total incoherence, which almost leads them to the *a priori denial of all exterior apparitions*, which they judge useless if not absolutely impossible. (Cf. in *True and False Apparitions in the Church*, the article by Father Laurentin, “Function and status of apparitions”, p. 153-205.) Others go so far as to reduce all supernatural visions to ordinary psychic or pathological experiences (Cf. in the same work, the incredible conference of Marc Oraison, which is as worthless from the scientific viewpoint as the theological viewpoint,

p. 127-151).

(167) II, p. 62.

(168) We will have to return to this question of the mode of reality of the apparitions, after the account of the apparitions of Our Lady at the Cova da Iria.

(169) CRC no. 116, April 1977. This study was taken up again in a conference: “The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass”, Passion Sunday 1982, 1:30 p.m., Maison Saint Joseph.

See the exposition St. Thomas gives on Eucharistic miracles, *Summa Theologiae*, Part Three, question 76, art. 8. On the immense capabilities, the amazing (and for us unimaginable) capabilities of the risen Body of Christ, see the study of our Father, “The Mystery of the Resurrection”, CRC 71, August 1973. “His new condition frees Him from the servitude of old and gives Him a spiritual liberty, where His Body is the most perfect instrument of His will of presence and action, multiplied tenfold... In its new state, the Body of Christ remains this absolute instrument of presence, relations, of appropriation, but raised to an incredible perfection... In all His Soul, by the infinitely perfect means of His Body, He becomes present wherever the priests call Him down... this is the Eucharist and its ubiquity.”

(170) I, p. 28.

(171) I, p. 28.

(172) Long excerpts from this report are found in *Fatima, Documentos*, by Father A. M. Martins, p. 500-502.

(173) The essential parts are quoted at length in *Fatima, Documentos*, p 502-515.

(174) *Uma Vida*, p. 305-327.

(175) We will quote them as they are found in *Memorias e Cartas da Irma Lucia*, by Father A. M. Martins (1973).

(176) IV, p. 159 et sq.

(177) See Lucy’s letter of May 18, 1941, regarding the famous prediction: “The war will end today.”

(178) Because of its charm, we have retained the Portuguese form of respectful address that Lucy always used when speaking to Our Lady.

(179) In between the brackets are those parts of the message which were kept secret by the seers at the time of the apparitions, and revealed later on by Lucy.

(180) «... and as a fitting reparation for the blasphemies and all the offences given to the Immaculate Heart of Mary», added Father da Fonseca in his version of the message. Canon Barthas, who was dependent on Father da Fonseca, consistently added this variant. While Father Alonso deplores this undue interpolation, he nevertheless believes that «there was a true manifestation of the

Immaculate Heart of Mary beginning with the very first apparition.» He bases his position, among other things, on the fact that Sister Lucy never asked Father da Fonseca to suppress this phrase he had added to the Memoirs. See “Fatima and the Immaculate Heart of Mary”, p. 30-33. (In “*Marie sous le symbole du coeur*”.)

(181) This last question and Our Lady’s reply are not found in the Memoirs of Lucy. However, they are found in the interrogation of the seers by Father Marques Ferreira, the parish priest of Fatima. The interrogation took place in the final days of May 1917. Hence these words are certainly authentic.

(182) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 62.

(183) During her interrogation by Canon Formigao, on September 27, 1917. See De Marchi, *Fatima from the Beginning*, p. 118.

(184) Ibid., p 116

(185) IV, p. 128.

(186) IV, p. 158.

(187) IV, p. 129.

(188) I, p. 28.

(189) I, p. 28.

(190) De Marchi, p. 55.

(191) We have already quoted it; see pages 52-53.

(192) IV, p. 129.

(193) De Marchi, p. 56.

(194) De Marchi, (Fr. Ed.), p. 87-88.

(195) De Marchi, p. 57.

(196) I, p. 28-29.

(197) De Marchi, p. 58.

(198) IV, p. 129.

(199) I, p. 29.

(200) For example, on September 27, 1917: «The first time you saw her were you frightened?» asked Canon Formigao. «I was so much so that I wanted to run away with Jacinta and Francisco, but She told us not to be afraid because She would not hurt us.» De Marchi, p. 118.

(201) IV, p. 163. It is remarkable that in her first written account, in 1922, Lucy expressed herself this way: «We were seized with fear, seeing the flashes of light surrounding her. Then she said to us...» etc. (*Uma Vida*, p. 305.)

(202) Such is indeed the literal meaning of the form employed by Lucy. Is it not preferable to retain this charming expression? Lucy surely used the same respectful form of address when speaking with her parents. (Cf. Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 58.) It is also worth pointing out that in Portuguese, “*a Senhora*”,

(“the Lady”, with a capital) means “Our Lady”.

(203) It is remarkable that the 1922 text says, «*Eu sou do Ceu*», as if to stress this privilege: «I myself am of Heaven.»

(204) According to Father Ferreira’s report, Lucy asked: «And what do you come to do in the world?» (A. M. Martins, *Documentos*, p. 500). The variation is unimportant. There are many other similar variations which are easily explained. Sister Lucy told Father Jongen: «When I speak about the apparitions, I limit myself to giving *the meaning* of the words I heard. When I write, on the other hand, I am careful to quote the words *literally*. (De Marchi, p. 344, Orig.) And even for the written accounts, Sister Lucy says: «The meaning of all I say is exact. As regards the manner of expressing myself, I do not know if I have exchanged one word for another...» III, p. 117. Clearly the same is true for unimportant details. Moreover, regarding the words of Our Lady, «engraved on her spirit in such a way that it is practically impossible to forget them», she nevertheless makes clear: «At least, the meaning of what is made known is never forgotten, unless it be that God also wills that this too be forgotten.» IV, p. 174.

(205) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 53-55.

(206) Is it necessary to point out that the future Pius IX, the Pope of the Immaculate Conception, was born on Sunday, May 13, 1792, and was baptized and consecrated to Our Lady on the same day? Another May 13, nearer to our own times, brings a smile to us: it is the happy day of Pentecost 1883, when little St. Therese of Lisieux, overwhelmed by a mysterious illness, which was not without some diabolical influence, was miraculously healed by the smile of Our Lady. The coincidence is especially touching since the future seer of Fatima, at the age of six, had enjoyed the same favour of Our Lady’s smile. Must we also point out that, since 1917, other events of May 13 have been related to the apparition at the Cova da Iria? As for May 13, 1981, it is still fresh in everyone’s mind, and of course we shall return to it.

(207) Our present solemnity of All Saints Day is a modern form of this old feast celebrated on May 13, in honour of the Blessed Virgin and all the martyrs. (See Dom Pius Parsch, *Le Guide dans l’Année Liturgique*, V, p. 336, Casterman, 1944.

(208) Francis Johnston, *Fatima, The Great Sign*, p. 31, 94 (Devon, 1980).

(209) The report of Father Ferreira says: «At the end of the six months, I will tell you what I want.» (A. M. Martins, *Documentos*, p. 500.) The written version of 1922 says about the same thing: «In the end, I will tell you what I want.» (S. Martins dos Reis, *Uma Vida*, p. 305.)

(210) De Marchi, p. 145.

(211) IV, p. 182.

(212) By Canon Barthas himself in many of his works: *Fatima, Great Miracle of the XXth Century* (1952) and again in the last edition of *It was Three Small Children* (1973).

(213) *Fatima, Altar do Mundo*, II, p. 133, quoted by De Marchi, p. 83

(214) See Alonso, *The Secret of Fatima: Fact and Legend*, p. 74-75.

(215) S. Martins dos Reis, *Sintese Critica*, p. 63, note 9.

(216) Canon Barthas remarks with reason that Our Lady of Fatima, always moderate in Her demands, did not ask Francisco to recite many 15 decade rosaries as certain authors say. Sister Lucy, having lived in Spain for many years, often employs the language of that country and thus she spoke of *Rosario*. In Spanish this word can refer to either a 5 decade or a 15 decade rosary. This is undoubtedly the source of the confusion.

When Lucy was asked if Our Lady had a rosary of 5 or 15 decades on Her arm, she answered simply: “I don’t know, I didn’t count the decades (*Barthas, Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 69, “chapelet ou rosaire”).

Even if, as Barthas justly remarks, the original interrogations simply say, «he too must say his rosary», Sister Lucy’s final answer, «he will have to recite many rosaries», corresponds best to the way the three seers understood Our Lady’s request.

(217) Here we cannot share the opinion of Father Alonso, who thinks this could mean “a long time”. (IV, note 13. See *Fatima, School of Prayer*, p. 104) We must point out that what Our Lady of Fatima said has many precedents in the revelations of the saints on Purgatory. Cf. Martin Jugie, *Purgatory*, p. 90-91 (Lethielleux, 1940.)

(218) *Sintese Critica*, p. 64, note 40.

(219) Abbé Georges de Nantes, *La Foi Catholique*, CRC no. 183, All Saints 1982, p. 19.

(220) II, p. 67.

(221) I, p. 32.

(222) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 66.

(223) I, p. 33.

(224) This indeed partly explains the harsh attitude of Maria Rosa towards her daughter, for already she had been overwhelmed with all sorts of trials for several months: Antonio, following the example of some evil companions, spent part of his time at the tavern, «which meant the loss of some of our property», Lucy writes. Since the resources of the family were diminishing, Gloria and Caroline had to leave the house to work as servants. Shortly after, however, Maria Rosa became ill and they had to be recalled. Even when she recovered, she remained tired and depressed from so many problems The apparitions began

around that time (cf. II, p. 65-66).

(225) II, p. 68-69.

(226) According to some recent drawings painted in 1981 by Sister Mary of the Conception (a religious of the Carmel of St. Joseph at Fatima), Our Lady held her hands open, a little below the horizontal level, and her palms on the bottom. These paintings were destined for exposition at the vice-postulation of Jacinta and Francisco. They were made according to the indications of Sister Lucy and corrected according to her directives.

(227) IV, p. 128-129.

(228) *Memorias e Partas*, p. 461.

(229) IV, p. 129.

(230) IV, p. 131.

(231) Cerbelaud Salagnac, *Fatima et Notre Temps*, p. 69.

(232) Acts of Benedict XV, Vol. I, p. 150 (Bonne Presse).

(233) Account of January 5, 1922, *Uma Vida*, p. 321. On the departure of Our Lady, see the interrogation of Canon Formigao on October 13, where the children specify that Our Lady left «with her back towards the people» (De Marchi, p. 145).

(234) Letter of December 5, 1937, quoted in Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 57.

(235) *The Truth About Fatima*, p. 73.

(236) On October 11, 1917. See De Marchi, p. 124.

(237) To Canon Formigao. See De Marchi, p. 116, 124.

(238) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 148.

(239) De Marchi, p. 126.

(240) De Marchi, p. 145.

(241) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 56-57.

(242) Is. 61:10.

(243) To Canon Formigao. See De Marchi, p. 119.

(244) *Uma Vida*, p. 321.

(245) Apparition of November 27, 1830.

(246) See also Sir. 6:24; Ez. 16:11; Ps. 45:13.

(247) Interrogation of September 27, 1917. It is regrettable that in Father De Marchi's book this question and its reply, as well as some others, are simply omitted, without any indication. See *Documentos*, p. 502-504.

(248) IV, p. 178.

(249) The difficulties of interpretation raised by this “ball of light” and these “earrings” call for an important remark. These kind of details are bewildering at first glance, and the most plausible explanation is still disputed. But at least they

are a sure mark of the sincerity of the seers, who say what they saw, even if they did not understand the meaning of what they perceived. In this we can also see a sure mark of the supernatural character of the vision, which was richer than all our *a priori* conceptions. For clearly neither the children nor any other sort of impostor could have invented these details.

(250) Already in her account of 1922, Lucy wrote: «I do not know if she had stockings on her feet or if she was barefoot, since I could not see her toes. This was due to the light, because of which I could not stare at them.» (*Uma Vida*, p. 321).

(251) Quoted by Martindale, in “The Message of Fatima”, p. 53, also Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 66-68.

(252) II, p. 67-68.

(253) St. Anthony was Portuguese. He was born at Lisbon in 1195 and died at Padua on June 13, 1231. Originally he was a Canon of St. Augustine, but later he joined the Franciscans of Coimbra. He is one of the most popular Portuguese saints.

(254) De Marchi, p. 62.

(255) De Marchi, p. 63.

(256) II, p. 68.

(257) De Marchi, p. 64.

(258) De Marchi, p. 65.

(259) *The Truth of Fatima*, p. 108.

(260) De Marchi, p. 65.

(261) *Ibid.*, p. 106.

(262) *Ibid.*

(263) Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 73.

(264) See the account of Maria Carreira in De Marchi, p. 66.

(265) Here the text of the Memoirs is incomplete. In a later account written for her confessor, Father Aparicio, at the end of 1927, Sister Lucy added this vitally important phrase.

(266) Memoirs, Appendix I, p. 191.

(267) IV, p. 65.

(268) Canon Barthas, in *Fatima 1917-1968*, devotes a special chapter to them, called “The Atmospheric Signs”, giving a summary of various statements by the witnesses (p 142-162).

(269) Regarding the “lightning” which announced Our Lady’s arrival, Sister Lucy in her Memoirs adds a useful clarification, which even dispels a seeming contradiction: «The flashes of lightning were not really lightning, but the reflected rays of a light which was approaching. It was because we saw the light

that we sometimes said we saw Our Lady coming.» (Indeed Francisco told Canon Formigao on September 27: «I see her coming from the side where the sun rises and stopping on the oak tree.» Jacinta said the same thing. And on October 19, Lucy declared to Father Ferreira of Lacerda: «The Lady arrived, coming from the east.»)

«But, properly speaking, we only perceived Our Lady in that light when she was already on the holm oak tree. It is because we do not know how to explain ourselves, and to avoid questions, that sometimes we said we saw Our Lady coming and other times we said we didn't see Her coming...» (In this sense Lucy told Canon Formigao: «I do not see where She comes from.» De Marchi, p. 118.)

«When we said we saw Her coming, we were referring to the approach of the light, which after all was Herself. And when we said we did not see Her coming, we were referring to the fact that we really saw Our Lady only when She was on the holm oak.» IV, p. 163.

(270) De Marchi, p. 123.

(271) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 146.

(272) De Marchi, p. 66.

(273) Barthas, p. 146.

(274) De Marchi, p. 68.

(275) Quoted by Barthas, op. cit., p. 73.

(276) De Marchi, p. 68.

(277) IV, p. 132.

(278) IV, p. 165.

(279) Regarding a book on Jacinta to be written by Canon Galamba, Sister Lucy wrote: «In my opinion, it would be pleasing to God and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (if) one chapter would be devoted to the subject of hell, and another to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.»

(280) IV, p. 131.

(281) III, p. 111-112.

(282) Ibid., p. 112.

(283) IV, p. 129.

(284) «She was so beautiful», St. Bernadette said, «that after seeing Her once one would be willing to die to see Her again!»

(285) IV, p. 129.

(286) II, p. 69.

(287) In Lucy's account in 1927.

(288) IV, p. 69.

(289) IV, p. 163-165.

(290) *Le Dévot Esclave de Jesus en Marie*, p. 167, Beauchesne, 1929.

(291) IV, p. 131.

(292) De Marchi, p. 124.

(293) IV, p. 178.

(294) A. M. Martins, *Documentos*, p. 500.

(295) IV, p. 152.

(296) De Marchi, p. 70.

(297) De Marchi, p. 61.

(298) Father Ferreira interrogated the seers on June 14 (*Documentos*, p. 500).

The dialogues with her mother and visit to the priest's house related by Lucy can thus be given a precise date: the afternoon and day after this apparition.

(299) II, p. 68-69.

(300) De Marchi, p. 72.

(301) De Marchi, p. 72; II, p. 70.

(302) II, p. 71.

(303) De Marchi, p. 74.

(304) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 217.

(305) De Marchi, p. 173. In fact, he refused to accept them once again in 1918.

(306) II, p. 71-72.

(307) IV, p. 132.

(308) II, p. 72.

(309) IV, p. 132.

(310) De Marchi, p. 74.

(311) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 81.

(312) On several occasions Bernadette felt drawn to the grotto by a mysterious and irresistible impulse. Here the fact is especially remarkable because Lucy had firmly decided not to return there any more.

(313) II, p. 73.

(314) De Marchi, p. 76.

(315) Lucy described this apparition in her Third and Fourth Memoir (III, p. 107-109; IV, p. 165-169).

(316) Testimony of Theresa dos Santos, one of Lucy's sisters, who was present at the apparition and described it for Father Ferreira.

(317) Echoes of these requests are found in the report of Father Ferreira and many other witnesses. Lucy requested several healings, and some conversions. Our Lady said she would heal some, but others no.

«As for the crippled son of Maria Carreira, she said that she would not cure him nor relieve him of his poverty, but that he must say the Rosary every day

with his family.

«One of those recommended was a sick person from Atougia who asked so be taken soon to Heaven. Our Lady gave the reply: “Tell her not to be in a hurry. I know very well when I shall come to take her.”» (De Marchi, p. 77).

(318) Lucy revealed this prayer for the first time in a letter of May 13, 1936 (*Memorias e Cartas*, p. 461), and again in 1937, in her Second Memoir (II, p. 72). It is not part of the great secret.

(319) IV, p. 165, 167.

(320) III, p. 108.

(321) The third part of the secret, written down by Sister Lucy on January 2, 1944, logically belongs here. It has still not been revealed.

(322) In the two Memoirs of Lucy, the texts of the great prophecy of the secret are identical, word for word. However, there is this difference: in the Fourth Memoir, Sister Lucy added this last phrase, which thus takes on capital importance. Logically, it comes right before the conclusion: “In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph.”

(323) IV, p. 165-169.

(324) De Marchi, p. 76.

(325) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 146.

(326) De Marchi, p. 76.

(327) *Ibid.*, p. 79.

(328) Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 165.

(329) II, p. 72.

(330) IV, p. 133.

(331) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 94.

(332) Quoted by De Marchi, (Fr. Ed.), p. 344.

(333) In Volume II, we will publish the scientific documents which testify to this. Among others, we will quote long excerpts from the *Bulletin of the Astronomical Society of France*, from the year 1938.

(334) De Marchi, p. 78.

(335) Here we give the text from the Fourth Memoir, in the most literal translation. However, the version usually adopted is substantially exact: “O my Jesus, forgive us *our sins*, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of *Thy mercy*.”

This beautiful prayer has been quoted with a number of variants. and it is still interpreted in various ways. Some believe that the second request concerns the souls in Purgatory. In an appendix we will justify the version we have adopted, and the explanation we propose.

(336) Read the beautiful parallel established by our Father between the Our

Father and the Hail Mary. CRC 182, October 1982.

(337) Jn. 12:31-33.

(338) Jn. 19:37; Za. 12:10; Eph. 4:7.

(339) See the letter of Sister Lucy to Father Gonçalves, May 18, 1941: The last supplication has been applied to the souls in Purgatory, “because it seems that the meaning of these last words were misunderstood; but I believe that Our Lady was referring to souls in the greatest danger of damnation. This continues to be my impression, and no doubt you will believe the same thing after having read the part of the secret I have written down, and knowing that Our Lady taught this prayer during the same apparition.” (*Memorias e cartas*, p. 443).

(340) III, p. 110.

(341) Autobiographical manuscripts, p. 117-119, *Livre de Vie* (1957).

(342) III, p. 110.

(343) In Volume II, we will quote all the relevant texts of Lucy’s incomparable Third Memoir during the chapter on the vision of hell. Indeed they are the most eloquent and authoritative commentaries.

(344) A. M. Martins, *Memorias e cartas*, p. 461.

(345) III, p. 109.

(346) I, p. 30.

(347) I, p. 33-34.

(348) I, p. 33.

(349) Quoted by De Marchi, (Orig.), p. 343.

(350) III, p. 108.

(351) II, p. 72.

(352) This visit to the presbytery undoubtedly took place on July 14, the day after the apparition, for the interrogation by Father Ferreira bears that date.

(353) I, p. 34.

(354) I, p.23.

(355) II, p. 73-74. During the months that followed, the attitude of Father Ferreira remained disturbing. It would seem reasonable that he tended to be in favour of authenticity. For he was well aware that there was no evidence, no fact, no words attributed to the Apparition which would betray a diabolical manifestation; on the contrary. This explains his cold objectivity and even amiability during the interrogations, and, as we will see, some of his public declarations.

Yet, at the same time, for reasons that we do not know, he could not bring himself to admit that these were authentic apparitions. This whole affair caused him so much trouble, and exhausted him so, that his animosity towards the seers and the Marto parents only increased... But let us leave this delicate question to

return to Jacinta and Francisco.

(356) I, p. 33.

(357) II, p. 72.

(358) II, p. 75.

(359) II, p. 75.

(360) *Cartas da Irma Lucia*, unpublished letters, p. 97 to 113. (Porto, 1978).

(361) IV, p. 131-132.

(362) De Marchi, p. 80.

(363) De Marchi, p. 126, 148.

(364) De Marchi, p. 119. Formigao Interrogation, September 27, 1917.

(365) IV, p. 178.

(366) See her response to Father Ferreira on August 13: "If Your Reverence wants to know the Secret, I will ask the Lady, and, if she allows me to, then I will tell it to you." (De Marchi, p. 92).

(367) *Documentos*, p. 514.

(368) Finally, she confided a few words to us, adding: "Tell this to no one. You may tell only Francisco." S. Martins dos Reis, *Uma Vida*, p. 309.

(369) See her statement to Father Jongen: "Why didn't you make it known earlier?" "Because no one asked me to." (Quoted by De Marchi, Orig., p. 344).

(370) *The Unprecedented Miracle of Fatima*, p. 12 (1939). In 1940, Father Martin Jugie, in his book on Purgatory, quoted a similar formula, p. 337. (Lethielleux).

(371) Namely the conjunction "and" and the words "of it", referring to God's mercy: "especially those most in need of it."

(372) O meu Jesus, perdoai-nos, (e) livrai nos do fogo do Inferno; levai as alminhas todas para o Ceu, principalmente aquelas que mais (d'ele) precisarem. (*Documentos*, p. 341, 501).

(373) Here are a few dates: September 7, 1922, letter of Carlos Mendes (Barthas, *Fatima, Great Miracle of the Twentieth Century*, p. 322). The account of January 5, 1922 (*Documentos*, p. 471). The interrogation before the canonical commission, July 8, 1924. The letter of Father Gonçalves of May 18, 1941 (*Documentos*, p. 443), and finally the texts of the Third and Fourth Memoirs (*Ibid.*, p. 221 and 341). On October 18, 1946, Sister Lucy dictated the same formula to Canon Barthas, adding: "*and help especially those...*" But the meaning is always the same.

(374) Cf. J. M. Alonso, *Fatima, escuela de oracion*, p. 105, and *Historia da Literatura*, p. 13: "The first written version of the Formigao manuscripts is precisely what the seers always repeated."

(375) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 101; see the whole note from p. 99-102.

(376) Alonso, *Historia da Literatura*, p. 14-15.

(377)... e aliviai as almas do Purgatorio especialmente as mais abandonadas. *Documentos*, p. 505.

(378) Let us point out that Father Alonso believed the theological interpretation of Canon Formigao could be justified, by insisting on the ordinary meaning of the word “alminhas”. According to him, the word “alminhas” settles the question: it refers to the souls in Purgatory. (*Fatima, escuela de oracion*, p. 105; 1980.) Let us remark only that:

1. Sister Lucy seems to use indifferently either the word “alminhas” or “almas”. (Text of May 18, 1941.) According to Castelbranco, the formula approved for the pilgrimages also has the word “almas”, while the Marto parents had learned the formula with the word “almas” in 1917.

2. Canon Formigao himself, in place of the word “alminhas”, came to substitute the clearer expression “almas do purgatorio”. Why then was the change necessary?

3. The majority of scholarly Portuguese critics interpret the word “alminhas” as does Sister Lucy herself, i.e. as designating the “poor souls” of sinners. Hence we conclude that in Portuguese, just as in Latin or French, the word “alminhas” is indefinite and, according to the context, can refer either to the souls of the departed or those of the living. Cf. *Documentos*, p. 447.

(379) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 101-102.

(380) III, p. 116.

(381) Undoubtedly referring to the unusual atmospheric phenomena observed at the moment of the apparition.

(382) These excerpts are taken from the solid study of Barthas, “The Portuguese Press and the Apparitions”, in *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 163-164.

(383) See S. Martins dos Reis, *Sintese Critica*, appendix.

(384) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, “The Sect and the Civil Power”, which sums up the conclusions of the detailed studies of Canon Galamba, p. 232-233.

(385) II, p. 74.

(386) De Marchi, p. 95; I, p. 35; II, p. 74.

(387) I, p. 34.

(388) II, p. 74-75. One must read, in De Marchi, p. 89-90, the interesting account of Ti Marto, who proved himself to be very courageous here, affirming resolutely that he believed the testimony of his children, while his brother-in-law Antonio “copped out”: «All these are old wives tales.»

(389) II, p. 74.

(390) IV, p. 133.

(391) I, p. 34-35.

(392) Letter of an eyewitness, quoted by Canon Formigao in *Os Episodios de Fatima*.

(393) II, p. 76.

(394) De Marchi, p. 91.

(395) From the canonical investigation, quoted by De Marchi, p. 92.

(396) De Marchi, p. 92.

(397) Although the persecution of poor Lucy continued, this last detail shows that the dos Santos family at least envisaged the possibility of true apparitions of Our Lady.

(398) Other testimonies make it clear that there were two flashes of light and «two strong claps of thunder which everybody heard». Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 147.

(399) Other witnesses affirm more precisely that the cloud remained visible about ten minutes, as on July 13. Regarding this cloud, see also the testimony of Manuel Gonçalves: «There was not the least bit of dust in the air. The cloud seemed to sweep the air clean.» (De Marchi, p 122.)

(400) De Marchi, p. 93-94.

(401) De Marchi, p. 122.

(402) De Marchi, p. 94. Barthas recalls that Father Ferreira was compelled to hide in his own presbytery (*Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 218).

(403) IV, p. 134

(404) To Dr. Fischer, one of the first historians of Fatima. Quoted by Dom Jean-Nesmy, p. 92-93.

(405) “Fatima, a luz da historia”, p. 186-187, quoted by dos Reis, *Sintese Critica*, p. 79.

(406) To Dr. Fischer, quoted by Dom Jean-Nesmy p 93.

(407) In reality, this was only partly true: granted, after hearing about the abduction, Maria Rosa had declared coldly: «If they are telling the truth, Our Lady will take care of them!» But the Marto parents were very disturbed and immediately sent two of their older children to get news.

(408) I, p. 35.

(409) IV, p. 134.

(410) In the presence of the children, the Tinsmith ordered a cauldron of boiling oil to be prepared, threatening to throw them in it if they would not reveal the secret. The three seers, in their simplicity, took the threat literally.

(411) I, p. 36.

(412) I, p. 36.

(413) IV, p. 133.

(414) IV, (Fr. Ed.), p. 185; cf. II, p. 77.

(415) I, p. 36.

(416) I, p 36.

(417) IV, p. 133; Father Fernando Leite, *Jacinta*, p. 38.

(418) A fact of decisive importance for critical purposes is that Artur de Oliveira Santos was never able to use any statement of the seers to discredit the apparitions... Nor did he deny the scene of the boiling oil, which some people questioned on the pretext that the first written testimony for this scene is from the canonical investigation, July 8, 1924. Later on the Tinsmith was stone silent on the subject of his action against Fatima. He died unhappily in Lisbon in 1955, without having shown any sign of repentance.

(419) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 100.

(420) Ibid., p. 101.

(421) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 94.

(422) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, The Portuguese Press and the Apparitions, p. 165-168.

(423) Five or six thousand, he says later on, choosing the lowest of all the estimates.

(424) Excerpts from the letter, taken from De Marchi, p. 94-95 and Barthas op. cit., p. 219.

(425) Indeed on this point she is mistaken, because Father Ferreira, in his written account of August 21, makes it clear that the apparition took place the preceding Sunday.

(426) She had also pointed out the usual phenomena which preceded the arrival of Our Lady: the light was dimmed, and already there was a first “flash of light”.

(427) IV, p. 169.

(428) IV, p. 134.

(429) On this spot was built the beautiful commemorative monument by the Hungarian exiles.

(430) The account of the Fourth Memoir (p. 169-171) and the Ferreira interrogation (*Documentos*, p. 500-501) nicely complete each other. The dialogue which we quote is borrowed entirely from these two sources.

(431) Referring to the imprisonment at Vila Nova de Ourem.

(432) Here the Ferreira report says: «Our Lady will come with an angel at each side. Our Lady of Sorrows will also come, surrounded by flowers.» This prediction can also be understood in a conditional sense: Saint Joseph would have come, etc.

(433) The Ferreira interrogation, more directly and with greater charm adds: «This money that you have, what do you want done with it?»

(434) Here Lucy probably attributes to Our Lady words which she did not speak until September 13. We will return to this point.

(435) IV, p. 171.

(436) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 116.

(437) De Marchi, p. 134.

(438) *Ibid.*, p. 107.

(439) Letter of Carlos Mendes to his fiancée, September 8, 1917. Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima*, Great Miracle of the Twentieth Century, p. 322.

(440) II, p. 78.

(441) De Marchi, p. 107. Yet Maria Rosa still could not bring herself to believe: «I used to think before that if there were just one other person who saw I anything, then I'd believe; but now, so many people say they have seen something, and I still don't believe!» This proves that between the recognition of extraordinary facts and the act of faith, there is a great leap to be made.

(442) Let us point out a coincidence in the dates which we think is providential: on August 19, the anniversary of his death, the Church celebrates the death of St. John Eudes, the first great Doctor of devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

(443) Cf. also Cant. 3:6: «Who is this coming up from the wilderness, like a column of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of the merchant?»; 4:16; 7:9; 7:14.

(444) Maria Carreira, quoted by De Marchi, p. 101-102.

(445) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 103. Many critics think that Lucy is mistaken when, in her Memoirs, she places the request for a chapel here. The reasons are this precise recollection of Maria Carreira, as well as the fact that the Ferreira report of August 21 has no reference to it. As a matter of fact, it is probable that she did not ask this question until September 13.

(446) Thus Dom Jean-Nesmy himself, after several very illuminating remarks, feels obligated to add: «No doubt, it is not difficult for God, who wishes the salvation of sinners, to find another way to save them, so that nobody is lost because of our cowardice.» *Lucie raconte Fatima*, p. 218. Alas! Our Lady did not say that, She even dared to affirm the exact opposite!

(447) Ez. 14:12-23; 18:1-32; 33:10-20.

(448) I, p. 30-32. Relying on the very uncertain order of the First Memoir, certain authors date this episode from the month of May or June. However, Sister Lucy in her Second Memoir gives the exact date: «If I am not mistaken, it was also during this month that we acquired the habit of giving our lunch to our little poor children, as I have already described in the account about Jacinta.» II, p. 78.

(449) I, p. 30-32.

(450) II, p. 77.

(451) II, p. 77-78.

(452) I, p. 37.

(453) II, p.79.

(454) A doctor of jurisprudence, he later became mayor of Torres Novas, and deputy of the National Assembly and secretary of the corporate chamber.

(455) In her Memoirs, Lucy gives a humorous reason for the difficulty: «If I am not mistaken, it was also during this month that a young man made his appearance at our home. He was of such tall stature that I trembled with fear. When I saw that he had to bend down in order to come through the doorway in search of me, I thought I must be in the presence of a German... My fright did not pass unnoticed by the young man, who sought to calm me; he made me sit on his knee and questioned me with great kindness.» (II, p. 80-81.)

(456) «Being a lawyer and doctor of jurisprudence», says Dr. Azevedo, «I proceeded as though I were a prosecuting attorney. It was impossible to trip them up.»

(457) We have already quoted the essential parts of the letter, which is also reproduced in Barthas, *Fatima, Great Miracle of the Twentieth Century*, p. 321-322.

(458) II, p. 81.

(459) I, p. 39.

(460) IV, p. 172.

(461) II, p. 79.

(462) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 111.

(463) IV, p. 171. Here Sister Lucy gives a charming excuse for her long digression. which however was highly interesting: “Well, none of this was called for here! It was a distraction of my pen, leading me away where I did not mean to go. But, never mind! It’s just another useless digression. I am not tearing it out, so as not to spoil the notebook.”

(464) IV, p. 172.

(465) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 149.

(466) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 112.

(467) The dialogue is entirely borrowed from the two source-texts of the Fourth Memoir (p. 172-173), and the report of Father Ferreira (*Documentos*, p. 501.)

(468) The Ferreira Report: “On the last apparition, St. Joseph will come with the Child Jesus to give peace to the world, and Our Lord will come to give His blessing to the people.

(469) II, p. 79; IV, p. 172.

(470) From the Ferreira report.

(471) IV, p. 172.

(472) Quoted by Dom Jean-Nesmy, p. 115. Here is one witness who can hardly be suspected: the parish priest of Santa Catarina had warned his parishioners against the apparitions. For sometimes he declared from the pulpit, “the devil disguises himself as an angel of light.” Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 225.

(473) Barthas, *Fatima, Unprecedented Miracle*, p. 203-204.

(474) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 112-113. See the account of Canon Galamba, *Altar do Mundo*, Vol. II, p. 90-91.

(475) P. 934, no. 1491. Desclée (1928).

(476) Without getting into a theological discussion here, let us point out that in 1955 Father R. Laurentin maintained the same thing with respect to Lourdes: “I know that this point is disputed”, he wrote, “but various reasons lead me to believe that the Blessed Virgin appeared to Bernadette in her own body, and not in some other way.” (*Sens de Lourdes*, p. 107-108; Lethielleux, 1955.)

(477) Cf. Formigao in De Marchi, (Orig.), p. 170, and IV, Fr., p. 167.

(478) Cant. 6:10.

(479) Ex. 19:9; 24:16; 16:10, etc.

(480) Lk. 9:34; Mk. 9:7; Mt. 17:5.

(481) This is one of the conclusions solidly established by Father R. Laurentin in his admirable exegetical study: “*Structure et Théologie de Luc I-II*, (Gabalda, 1957), and again, quite recently, in his monumental and fascinating work, *Les Evangiles de l’enfance du Christ*, p. 70-75 (DDB, December 1982).

(482) I Kings 8:10-13; “When the priests left the sanctuary, the cloud filled the temple of Yahweh... the Glory of Yahweh filled the temple of Yahweh!”

(483) To prove that we are in the purest spirituality of Fatima here, we will give an excerpt of a letter where Sister Lucy, commenting on the *Ave Maria*, boldly shows that this prayer is addressed to God Himself, of whom Mary is the temple: «You, O Mary, are the first living temple of the Holy Trinity, in you abides the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (“The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, therefore the Child shall be holy and shall be called the Son of God.” Lk. 1:35.) And now that You are a living Tabernacle, a Monstrance, a living Temple, the permanent abode of the Most Holy Trinity, Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us poor sinners now and at the hour of our death.» Letter of April 12, 1970, on the Rosary, published by S. Martins dos Reis, *Uma Vida*, p. 372-373.

(484) *Derniers Entretiens*, June 9, 1897, p. 226 (Desclée, 1971).

(485) Apparition of July 19, 1830.

(486) Jn. 20:29.

(487) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 148.

(488) We will examine these testimonies in an appendix, showing that they in no way detract from the supernatural character of the phenomena observed by the immense majority of pilgrims.

(489) II, p. 78; cf. I, p. 38; IV, p. 145.

(490) II, p. 78-79.

(491) II, p. 80.

(492) II, p. 79-80.

(493) De Marchi, p. 127-128.

(494) Later on his brother, the scholar Marqués da Cruz, was to write a poetic work on Fatima. Regarding the date of this sojourn, see S. Martins dos Reis, *Sintese Critica*, appendix, p. 12.

(495) Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 125.

(496) De Marchi, p. 124.

(497) II, p. 82.

(498) De Marchi, p. 128.

(499) Here Francisco is undoubtedly alluding to the apparitions of June 13 and July 13: when Our Lady directed towards them the reflections of the divine light which shone from Her hands, the three seers felt as though they were absorbed in God; and then, in a mysterious vision, it was also given to them to contemplate Our Lord and His immense sadness because of the sins of the world.

(500) IV, p. 135.

(501) To avoid repeating ourselves, we will save for our chapter on the solar phenomenon the detailed study of this hypothesis. What we will say goes equally for the extraordinary phenomena observed from June 13 to September 13.

(502) De Sede, p. 113: "Since however nothing extraordinary happened that day, they spread a rumour that a rain of flowers had fallen from the sky." And then, with a false reference, he quotes a testimony which does not even concern the phenomenon of September 13! Concerning the luminous globe, and the mysterious cloud, he prefers to say nothing. Although the procedure is facile, it is hardly convincing.

(503) Quoted by Dom Jean-Nesmy, p. 115.

(504) Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 154.

(505) Barthas, *Fatima, Great Miracle of the Twentieth Century*, p. 324.

(506) Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 155.

(507) Conversation with Canon Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 150.

(508) On this question one can consult the article of Father R. Laurentin: “L’objectif et le subjectif en matière d’apparitions” (*Nouvelles de l’Institut catholique de Paris*, Feb. 1977, p. 54-72.) There are some interesting remarks, while many points in this study are very much open to question.

(509) *Fatima, Altar do Mundo*, II, p. 90-91. Originally from Olival, about nine miles from Fatima, our seminarian was fourteen at the time. Canon Galamba became the intimate friend of Bishop da Silva of Leiria, who played an important role in spreading the message of Fatima. In 1938, he was the first to publish long excerpts from the Memoirs of Lucy, in his book *Jacinta*.

(510) J. M. Alonso, *Historia da Literatura sobre Fatima*, p. 9.

(511) Here Canon Formigao undoubtedly is referring to a conversation with Manuel Gonçalves, from the hamlet of Montelo:

“What do the inhabitants of Fatima think of the children’s affirmations? Do they believe them? Do they think they are lying or perhaps victims of a hallucination?”

“At first the people did not want to go to the Cova. No one believed the children. *At present a large proportion of the people think that the children are speaking the truth. For my own part I am convinced of this.*”

(Conversation of October 11, 1917; Quoted by De Marchi, p. 122.)

(512) Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 274-275.

(513) In June, 1921: *Os Episodios maravilhosos de Fatima* (70 pages), and in September, 1927: *As Grandes maravilhas de Fatima* (412 pages). Both appeared under the pseudonym Viscount of Montelo because the apparitions were not yet officially recognized.

(514) *O Dr. Formigao, Homen de Deus e Apostolo de Fatima*, p 490-492, Fatima 1979.

(515) J. M. Alonso, *Historia da Literatura sobre Fatima*, p. 916.

(516) II, p. 76.

(517) Lucy writes: “Thank God, human respect and self-love were, at that time, still unknown to me. For that reason, I was as much at ease with any person at all, as I was with my parents.

(518) Interrogation of September 27, 1917. De Marchi, p. 118.

(519) Account of Maria Madalena de Martel Patricio, which appeared in *O Dia* of October 19, 1917. Quoted by De Marchi, p. 130.

(520) Maria Carreira lived at Moita, a neighbouring village.

(521) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 132.

(522) P. 133.

(523) IV, p. 172.

(524) II, p. 82.

(525) De Marchi, p. 134. Lucy relates, in her Memoirs, that she does not remember putting on these dresses: «I seem to recall that a lady did indeed appear and she wished to dress us up like that, but we refused.» (Memoirs, p. 182.) In any case, there still exists a photograph of a soldier carrying Jacinta in his arms right after the apparitions, where she does indeed have a crown of flowers.

(526) IV, p. 172.

(527) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 134.

(528) II, p. 82.

(529) IV, p. 172.

(530) Testimony of Dr. Almeida Garrett, professor at the University of Coimbra. Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 344.

(531) *O Seculo*, article of October 15, 1917. Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima, Unprecedented Miracle*, p. 296.

(532) Indeed, to be in the same time zone as the belligerents, the Portuguese governments had imposed a legal time 90 minutes ahead of the solar time.

(533) De Marchi, p. 133.

(534) Statement of Maria Rosa Pereira to the parish priest of Fatima on November 13, 1918. Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 128.

(535) Quoted by Dom Jean-Nesmy, p. 101.

(536) We follow the account given in the Fourth Memoir (p. 172-173), which for that matter corresponds quite closely with Father Ferreira's report, although the words of Our Lady are not given in the same order.

(537) II, p. 82.

(538) Father Ferreira's report. See *Documentos*, p. 501.

(539) Ferreira Report.

(540) De Marchi, (Orig.) p. 153. Maria Rosa declared the same thing herself during the canonical investigation.

(541) IV, p. 173.

(542) De Marchi, p. 135-136.

(543) De Marchi, p. 136.

(544) *The Truth About Fatima*, p. 111-112.

(545) IV, p. 173.

(546) Message of July 13.

(547) The priority given to this request in all the other versions of the message at least proves its primordial importance. However, it is uncertain whether it conforms to the real order of the dialogue, for the order proposed in the Fourth Memoir seems more logical.

(548) II, p. 82.

(549) On the evening of the 13th, Lucy explained to Canon Formigao that Our Lady did not use the word “penance”: “Did she say that the people were to do penance?” “Yes.” “Did she use the word penance?” “No. She said we were to say the Rosary and amend our lives and ask pardon of Our Lord, but She did not use the word penance.” (De Marchi, p. 144.) Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima, Great Miracle of the Twentieth Century*, p. 324.

(550) Lk. 13:3.

(551) III, p. 115.

(552) Letter of April 12, 1970, published by S. Martins dos Reis, *Uma Vida*, p. 372. When, at the conclusion, we will make a synthetic commentary on all the requests of Our Lady, we will quote these important letters at length: they combine mysticism and the deepest theological insights with numerous polemical points against the “wave of diabolical folly” sweeping over the world and even invading the Church.

(553) IV, p. 173.

(554) Letter of Sister Lucy to Father Gonçalves, May 18, 1941. *Memorias e Cartas*, p. 443.

(555) The last two apparitions of April 7 and July 16 were silent.

(556) On September 13, she simply agreed to the request of Maria Carreira, whose request was simply an anticipation of the will of the Blessed Virgin. Thus when Canon Formigao interrogated her on September 27: “Where does Our Lady want the chapel built? In the Cova da Iria?” Lucy could only answer: “I don’t know, She didn’t say.” (De Marchi, p 120.)

(557) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 145.

(558) Account of Sister Lucy given to John Haffert in 1946. Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 135-136.

(559) De Marchi, p. 143.

(560) Jn. 19:2. See also Apoc. 19:13: «He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.»

The account of 1922 adds: «Our Lord appeared on the right of the sun, but we only saw the bust of His Head. On the other side was Our Lady of Sorrows, dressed in violet. They were surrounded by a light which seemed to blind us.» S. Martins dos Reis, *Uma Vida*, p. 319.

(561) Letter to Father Gonçalves, August 18, 1940. *Memorias e Cartas*, p. 427.

(562) De Marchi, p. 143. Undoubtedly we have here an example of an error committed by the investigator, for according to other sources, Our Lord continued to appear at the same time as Our Lady of Sorrows.

(563) Does this disparity have a symbolic meaning? Does it evoke the different vocations of the three seers, as in the apparition of June 13? It is not impossible.

(564) A simple hypothesis: the expression *ao colo*, which literally means «around the neck of», but more generally «in the arms», may have been behind the misunderstanding.

(565) See the account of the apparition which Sister Lucy gave to John Haffert in 1946, where she says that she saw «Saint Joseph holding the Child Jesus in the light ...»

(566) *Documentos*, p. 508, 510.

(567) «A guerra acaba ainda hoje.» *Documentos*, p. 501.

(568) *Documentos*, p. 512.

(569) *Documentos*, p. 515.

(570) *Sintese Critica*, p. 75-76.

(571) In *Na Orbita de Fatima*, p. 159-182 (1958), and again in *Sintese Critica*, p. 75-76 (1968).

(572) *Sintese Critica*, p. 75-76.

(573) Cf. Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 138-139. In his interrogation of October 19, Canon Formigao echoes these initial statements of Lucy right after the apparition: «Some people declare that they heard you say that Our Lady had said the war would end shortly. Is that true?» “I said exactly what Our Lady had said.” (De Marchi, p. 150.)

Canon Martins dos Reis himself recognizes that this version, «the war will end», is equally attested by written documents dating back to October 13 1917. *Sintese Critica*, p. 75.

(574) *Memorias e Cartas*, p. 445.

(575) Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima, Great Miracle of the Twentieth Century*, p. 324. As we will see, this last formula is no doubt the key to the understanding of the whole question. For if it is proven that Our Lady spoke in this manner, promising peace *under a condition*, it is no longer of any great importance whether she spoke in the present or future tense, or whether she said “today” or not, for then all the expressions would be equivalent. We will return to this point.

(576) Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 138. The original text is in *Fatima 50*, October 1967, p. 14.

(577) A. M. Martins dos Reis, *Memorias e Cartas*, p. 443-444.

(578) Quoted by De Marchi, (Fr. Ed.), p. 221.

(579) IV, p. 173.

(580) IV, p. 182. «What I do remember well about that particular day is that I arrived home without my plaits, which I wore down to my waist, and that my

mother was most upset when she saw that I had even less hair than Francisco. Who stole my plaits? I don't know. Amid the crush of such a multitude, there was no lack of scissors or thieving hands... Nothing is my own, so what of it? Everything belongs to God. May He dispose all as best pleases Him!»

(581) II, p. 82.

(582) Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima, Unprecedented Miracle*, p. 294.

(583) Cf. the article by Msgr. A. Borges, *Fatima* 50, October-November 1968.

(584) Letter of May 18, 1941 to Father Gonçalves, *Memorias e Cartas*, p. 443-445.

(585) II, p. 82.

(586) Ibid.

(587) De Marchi, p. 149-150. A simple reading over of the replies of Lucy to the interrogation of October 19 will show how well-founded the remarks of Canon Formigao were. Lucy hesitates in speaking not only about certain words of the apparition, but even about her own facts and gestures, which she no longer remembers. Here are two examples: «“On the 13th did you tell the people to look at the sun?” “I don't remember doing that.” “Did you tell them to shut their umbrellas?” “In the other months I did; I don't remember about this last time.”» (De Marchi, p. 150-151).

(588) P. 111 to 133 (Fundao, 1959).

(589) Eventually Father Simonin and Dom Jean-Nesmy (p. 229) rallied to this solution, which is as simple as it is judicious.

(590) Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima, Great Miracle of the Twentieth Century*, p. 324.

(591) S. Martins dos Reis, *Uma Vida*, p. 317.

(592) This last phrase should not mislead us. Undoubtedly it is the echo of the great secret announcing terrible chastisements on humanity if it is not converted: “Several nations will be annihilated.” Although the expression is clumsy, it supplies one more proof that the eschatological character of the secret was not invented twenty years later by Sister Lucy.

(593) «During these three days, there were so many people who wanted to speak to us, waiting their turn from one day to the next, that Jacinta spoke to some and I to others, both of us at our own house.» (Letter of May 8, 1941, to Father Gonçalves. *Memorias e Cartas*, p. 443-444.)

(594) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 154.

(595) Ferreira Report.

(596) It is sufficient to add the conjunction AND to the response Sister Lucy made to Canon Formigao on the evening of October 13, for the formula to be

perfect and remove all difficulties: «Our Lady said we were to amend our lives and not offend Our Lord any more because He was too much offended already, and that we were to pray the Rosary and ask pardon for our sins [AND in this case), that the war would end today, and that we could expect our soldiers home shortly.» De Marchi, p. 144.

(597) *Pensées*, Br. 578.

(598) *O Seculo*, October 15, 1917.

(599) The article in *O Seculo* of October 13 is entitled: “Utterly supernatural! The apparitions of Fatima. Thousands of people go to a moor, around Ourem, to see and hear the Virgin Mary (sic).”

On the evening of the Miracle of the Sun, the journalist wrote down his account of things, which was published in *O Seculo* of October 15, under the title: «How the sun danced in broad daylight at Fatima. The apparitions of the Virgin. – What the sign of heaven consists of. – Thousands declare it is a miracle. – War and peace.» Excerpts can be found in De Marchi, p. 199.

The last article finally appeared on October 29, in *Ilustração Portuguesa*, p. 353-356. The title alone sums up the evolution in the journalist’s thought: «The miracle of Fatima. – Letter to somebody seeking an unbiased witness.» Gilbert Renault (alias Colonel Rémy) provides a full translation of this in “Fatima 1917-1957”, p. 142-148.

The Portuguese review *Fatima 50* published a full photocopy of these three documents in its issue of October 13, 1967, p. 6-10; 14-15.

(600) He quotes extremely valuable testimonies in *Broteria* of May 1951 (p. 511-515).

(601) *Meet the Witnesses*, Ave Maria Institute, 1961. Barthas gives a few excerpts in *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 359-361.

(602) *O Milagre da Sol, e o Segredo de Fatima*, Porto.

(603) Cf. José Gêraldes Freire, *The Secret of Fatima*, p. 14 (Fatima, 1978).

(604) We will quote all references to the excerpts used, so that the reader can verify for himself the context they are taken from. On the other hand since there are not very many, we will examine all the discordant testimonies, cited by G. de Sede – who performed his own investigation – or quoted by the other enemies of Fatima. We will quote all of them without exception.

(605) *O Seculo*, October 15.

(606) Avelino de Almeida. *Ilustração Portuguesa*.

(607) De Sede, p. 113-114.

(608) *Fatima, Unprecedented Miracle*, p. 297.

(609) Article of October 29, “Fatima 1917-1957”, G Renault, p. 143.

(610) Quoted by Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 159.

(611) See for example the conversation reported by Canon Formigao: «What fools we were. Why didn't we stay in Ourem and have a decent meal there!» (De Marchi, p. 132.)

(612) Our journalist is exact, for Almeida Garrett notes for his part that they arrived shortly after one o'clock (legal time).

(613) *O Seculo*, October 15.

(614) As we have said, in Portugal there was an hour and a half's difference between legal time and solar time.

(615) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 132-133.

(616) Cf. *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 347, 361.

(617) This text is quoted *in extenso* in *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 343-347, and for the essential in De Marchi, (Fr. Ed.) p. 199-202. Note also that this report is almost contemporary with the event since it was drawn up only two months after, at the request of Canon Formigao, who published it in his first work in 1921.

(618) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 344.

(619) *O Seculo*, October 15.

(620) Alfredo da Silva Santos, quoted by De Marchi, p. 140.

(621) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 355-356.

(622) *O Seculo*, October 15.

(623) De Marchi, p. 137.

(624) *O Seculo*, October 15.

(625) De Marchi, p. 137-138.

(626) De Marchi, p. 135. Again in 1957, to Father Messias Dias Coelho, he declared: «What impressed me the most was being able to stare at the sun.» (Father André Richard, *La Reine aux Mains Jointes*, p. 96 (La Colombe, 1958.)

(627) *O Seculo*, October 15.

(628) Maria do Carmo Marques da Cruz Menezes. De Marchi, p. 139.

(629) Quoted by De Marchi, p. 139.

(630) De Marchi, p. 136. "Three times in all, with a duration, each time, of between three to four minutes..." (*Correio da Beira* of October 30, quoted by Dom Jean-Nesmy, p. 121.)

(631) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 358.

(632) De Marchi, p. 138-139.

(633) De Marchi, p. 136.

(634) De Marchi, p. 139.

(635) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 358; De Marchi, p. 135.

(636) De Marchi, p. 141.

(637) De Marchi, p. 138.

- (638) De Marchi, p. 135.
- (639) De Marchi, p. 140.
- (640) De Marchi, p. 141.
- (641) *Broteria*, May 1951, p. 512.
- (642) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 353.
- (643) *Ibid.*, p. 358, 360, 361.
- (644) De Marchi, p. 136.
- (645) Cited by J. Castelbranco, *Le Prodige Inouï De Fatima*, p. 54. It is found on p. 50 of the translation *More About Fatima*.
- (646) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 153.
- (647) Barthas, p. 357-358. See also the testimony of Dominic Reis, given to John Haffert, Barthas, p. 361.
- (648) De Marchi, p. 139.
- (649) Quoted by Dom Jean-Nesmy, p. 120.
- (650) De Marchi, p. 140. It was he who composed, later on, the verses of the Fatima Ave.
- (651) De Marchi, p. 141.
- (652) *Ilustração Portuguesa*, October 29.
- (653) De Marchi, p. 139.
- (654) *Ilustração Portuguesa*, October 29. Gilbert Renault, p. 143.
- (655) *Fatima, Great Miracle of the Twentieth Century*, p. 329.
- (656) *Loc. cit.*
- (657) *Le Monde*, May 11, 1967. It seems H. Fesquet has not read anything at all on Fatima except the article by Father Jacquemet in *Catholicisme*, Col. 1112-1115. It is regrettable that a learned encyclopaedia, which in some other places is useful, presents such a defective article despite its appearance of objectivity: «The purity of the Catholic faith does not require that northern people experience the same vibrations as those of the south when reading accounts of this nature, whatever might be the exact nature of the phenomenon described.»
- Besides his hypocrisy, this phrase alone abases our author to the level of the rationalist of the *Documentation antireligieuse* which contented itself with saying: «The Portuguese are a merry bunch.» This is absurd.
- (658) Masson, 1973.
- (659) P. 50.
- (660) Page VIII. In the preface the author sums up all the conclusions of his thesis.
- (661) P. 51.
- (662) We will show in an appendix how the origin of this myth goes back to this clever popularizer, and his fantastic work which enjoyed a huge success: *The*

Psychology of the Crowds, Alcan, 1896.

(663) P. 117.

(664) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 352.

(665) P. 119.

(666) We read, for example, from the pen of Avelino de Almeida: «Some pious people continue to hope that the Virgin Mary... in Her goodness, will even go so far as to tell them when a peace treaty will be signed.» And earlier on: «Our Lady announces to the faithful that on October 13 – that is, today – She will tell the real reason for Her visits, and by Her heavenly apparition console those who are in the state of grace (sic).» *O Seculo*, October 13, 1917.

(667) We will return to this disputed point in an appendix.

(668) Maria Augusta Saraiva Vieira de Campos, who drew up a detailed account of her voyage in October 1917. Dom Jean-Nesmy, p. 120.

(669) P. 110.

(670) On this eminent role of Metaphysics, «this highpoint of natural wisdom», see the study of our Father: «Metaphysics, judge of science and religion» (CRC no. 170, October 1981, p. 3-7).

(671) Cf. Avelino de Almeida, article of October 29.

(672) *Le Monde*, May 11, 1967.

(673) *Documentos*, p. 519.

(674) On the expression employed by the crowd, see *O Seculo*, October 15.

(675) De Marchi, (Orig.) p. 198.

(676) Joachim Pereira dos Reis, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 352.

(677) Interview with Father Messias Dias Coelho, in January, 1957. Three weeks later, the old man returned to his God. Quoted by A. Richard, *La Reine aux Mains Jointes*, p. 96.

(678) *O Seculo*, October 15.

(679) De Marchi, p. 140.

(680) *O Seculo*, October 15.

(681) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 357.

(682) *Les Apôtres*, p. XLIII.

(683) *Fatima 1917-1968*. “The Portuguese Press and the Apparitions”, p. 163-175.

(684) P. 175.

(685) Cf. *The Holy Shroud, Proof of the Death and Resurrection of Christ*, by Brother Bruno Bonnet-Eymard, member of the scientific congresses of Turin (1978) and Bologna (1981). (Maison Saint-Joseph).

(686) Maria Carreira, De Marchi, p. 136.

(687) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 360.

- (688) De Marchi, p. 141.
- (689) *La Reine aux Mains Jointes*, p. 97.
- (690) De Marchi, p. 141.
- (691) Statement to John Haffert, quoted in *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 361.
- (692) *La Reine aux Mains Jointes*, p. 96.
- (693) These will be described at length as we retrace the history of the pilgrimage. Cf. Michel Agnellet, *Miracles at Fatima*, p. 125-133. Ed. Trévisé, 1958.
- (694) “Psychoses Collectives”, in *Encyclopédie medico-chirurgicale*, 1967.
- (695) *Psychology of the Crowds*, p. 35. See this whole chapter, p. 27-37.
- (696) P. 30-31.
- (697) Ellenberger.
- (698) See the famous fable of La Fontaine about the floating sticks.
- (699) He sustained this thesis in the International Congress of Lourdes, in 1958. It was refuted by Canon Martins dos Reis, *The Miracle of the Sun*, p. 15-63; *Sintese Critica*, p. 76-77.
- (700) See our appendix: “The Atmospheric Phenomena From May 13 to September 13”, after Chapter VIII.
- (701) *Atlantis*, no. 295 (1977)
- (702) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 227.
- (703) De Marchi, p. 139.
- (704) *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 173-174.
- (705) Quoted by Father da Fonseca, *Broteria*, May 1951, p. 514-515. The review erroneously dates the letter October 13.
- (706) *The Message of Fatima*, p. 82.
- (707) *What Happened at Fatima*, p. 10.
- (708) *Nova et Vetera*, May-August 1948, p. 187.
- (709) *La Vérité de Fatima*, p. 123.
- (710) *La Reine aux Mains Jointes*, p. 99.
- (711) De Marchi, p. 140.
- (712) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 153-154. Here is a significant example: before the official commission, Antonio de Paula declared that, on October 13, he did look at the changes of colour on the crowds and on nature, and that he did not see the rotation of the sun. He did not look up to the sun, absorbed as he was by the spectacle below.
- (713) P. 198, (Orig.).
- (714) *La Reine aux Mains Jointes*, p. 98-99.
- (715) J. M. Alonso, Fatima I and Fatima II. The “old” and “new” history of Fatima, p. 59 in *True and False Apparitions in the Church*. Lethielleux, 1976.

- (716) Alonso, *Fatima I and Fatima II*, p. 59.
- (717) 1958, Téqui 1972.
- (718) *Le Meraviglie di Fatima*.
- (719) Cf. J. M. Alonso, *Historia da Literatura sobre Fatima*, p. 29-33.
- (720) Cf. Robert A Graham, S.J., *Profezie di Guerra. Fatima e la Russia nella propaganda dei belligeranti dopo il 1942*. *La Civiltà Cattolica*, October 3, 1981, p. 15-26.
- (721) *Bij de Verschijningen en de voorzeggingen van Fatima*. *Revue Streven*, 1944, p. 129-149; p. 193-215.
- (722) *Bij de Verschijningen en de voorzeggingen van Fatima*, Brussels, 1945.
- (723) The text of this conversation, which took place in February 1946, can be found in *Testimony on the Apparitions of Fatima*, by Father De Marchi, p. 341-347.
- (724) “Fatima and Criticism”, published in the Portuguese review *Broteria*, May 1951, p. 505-542.
- (725) *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, June 1952, p. 580-606.
- (726) *Broteria*, February 1953, p. 170-191.
- (727) “A Look at Fatima and Evaluation of a Discussion”, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, May 16, 1953, p. 392-406.
- (728) See the article by Giacomo Martina, *Osservatore Romano*, February 20, 1979, p. 9.
- (729) May-August 1948, p. 186-188.
- (730) p. 537-539.
- (731) *Cahiers Marials*, January-February 1961, no. 25, p. 29 – *Lourdes, an Authentic History of the Apparitions*, p. 14.
- (732) In the same issue of *Cahiers Marials*, the enormous blunder on p. 41 is significant: our critic presents Canon Formigao, the first and most celebrated historian of Fatima, and his pseudonym, “Viscount of Montelo”, as two different persons!
- (733) May 15, 1967, p. 31.
- (734) *Le Figaro*, May 10, 1967.
- (735) *Le Monde*, May 11, 1967.
- (736) *Les Etudes*, July-August 1967, p. 81-82.
- (737) “The Secret of Fatima”, *Historia*, May 1982, p. 44-56.
- (738) “On the Apparitions and Predictions of Fatima”, *Streven*, 1944.
- (739) *Streven*, p. 213.
- (740) p. 213, p. 132-140.
- (741) “On Fatima and Criticism”, *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 1952, p. 583-584. (Henceforth this journal will be referred to as NRT.)

- (742) *Streven*, p. 136-137.
- (743) *Ibid.*, p. 138.
- (744) NRT, p. 587.
- (745) *Streven*, p. 206-207.
- (746) NRT, p. 598.
- (747) *Streven*, p. 143.
- (748) NRT, p. 582.
- (749) NRT, p. 589.
- (750) NRT, p. 588.
- (751) NRT, p. 599.
- (752) NRT, p. 590.
- (753) NRT, p. 590-591.
- (754) *Fatima and Criticism*, p. 528-529.
- (755) NRT, p. 595.
- (756) NRT, p. 589; cf. *Streven*, p. 147.
- (757) NRT, p. 603.
- (758) NRT, p. 589.
- (759) *Streven*, p. 130.
- (760) NRT, p. 588; *Streven*, p. 209.
- (761) *Streven*, p. 201.
- (762) NRT, p. 592.
- (763) *Streven*, p. 197.
- (764) NRT, p. 600.
- (765) *Streven*, p. 209.
- (766) NRT, p. 596.
- (767) NRT, p. 597; *Streven*, p. 204.
- (768) *Streven*, p. 201.
- (769) *Streven*, p. 203.
- (770) Alonso, *Fatima I and Fatima II*, p. 80; cf. *Fatima and Criticism*, p. 414-415.
- (771) Alonso, *Fatima I and Fatima II*, p. 81.
- (772) *Streven*, excerpt from the general conclusion, p. 213. (Emphasis ours.)
- (773) *Streven*, p. 148.
- (774) p. 213.
- (775) Cf. Chapter III, and the whole second part dealing with accounts of the apparitions.
- (776) To reassure readers who believe in Fatima, and perhaps are unsettled by such a stream of objections, reported objectively and with their full force, let us say right away that for the most part they are based on a flagrant lack of

documentation. Father Alonso shows this easily in his study: *Fatima and Criticism* (see his conclusion on page 407: “The critical thought of Dhanis seems essentially conditioned by his lack of documentation on the subject of the critical sources.”) Such ignorance may possibly have been excusable in 1944, but not in 1952...

- (777) See for example *Streven*, p. 213.
- (778) Dhanis explicitly repeats this accusation; *Streven*, p. 213; NRT, p. 589.
- (779) NRT, p. 582.
- (780) *Streven*, p. 131.
- (781) A. Poulain, S.J., *Des Graces d’Oraison*, p. 318-335, 1906.
- (782) In *True and False Apparitions in the Church*, p. 163.
- (783) *Streven*, p. 213-214.
- (784) NRT, June 1952.
- (785) *Streven*, p. 197.
- (786) p. 201.
- (787) p. 213.
- (788) NRT, p. 589.
- (789) *The Truth of Fatima*, p. 169.
- (790) Henri Ey, *Treatise on Hallucinations*, Vol. II, p. 1190, Masson, 1973.
- (791) NRT, p. 585; *Streven*, p. 138.
- (792) *Streven*, p. 146.
- (793) NRT, p. 584.
- (794) *Streven*, p. 138; p. 194.
- (795) *Fatima and Criticism*, p. 403.
- (796) May-August 1948, p. 186-188.
- (797) p. 407-435.
- (798) Gerard de Sede, *Fatima. Enquête sur une Imposture*, p. 10.
- (799) André Lorulot, *La Vérité sur les Apparitions*, p. 27.
- (800) De Sede, p. 248.
- (801) p. 10 & 255.
- (802) p. 12.
- (803) p. 12.
- (804) p. 12.
- (805) p. 12.
- (806) p. 237.
- (807) Dom J.-Nesmy, *The Truth of Fatima*, p. 158.
- (808) Abbé Georges de Nantes, *Controversy with Louis Rougier*, CRC 76 p. 3, January 1974.
- (809) De Sede, p. 127.

- (810) De Sede, p. 128-129.
- (811) De Sede, p. 128.
- (812) De Sede, p. 129.
- (813) De Sede, p. 128-129.
- (814) De Sede, p. 104.
- (815) De Sede, p. 130.
- (816) De Sede, p. 130.
- (817) De Sede, p. 131.
- (818) De Sede, p. 115.
- (819) De Sede, p. 115-116.
- (820) De Sede, p. 131-132.
- (821) De Sede, p. 88-89.
- (822) Alonso, *Fatima and Criticism*, p. 423.
- (823) De Sede, p. 104.
- (824) De Sede, p. 99.
- (825) De Sede, p. 141.
- (826) De Sede, p. 105-106.
- (827) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 117.
- (828) De Sede, p. 88-89.
- (829) De Sede, p. 104.
- (830) De Sede, p. 101; Barthas, p. 163-164.
- (831) Martins dos Reis, *Uma Vida*, p. 389-390.
- (832) Dom J.-Nesmy, op. cit., p. 246.
- (833) De Sede, p. 106-107.
- (834) De Marchi, *Testimony on the Apparitions*, p. 87-88.
- (835) De Sede, p. 141.
- (836) p. 141-142.
- (837) Memoirs, p. 86, p. 181 (Fr. Ed.).
- (838) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 216-231.
- (839) De Sede, p. 118, note 26.
- (840) De Sede, p. 104.
- (841) De Sede, p. 241.
- (842) De Sede, p. 111.
- (843) Dom J.-Nesmy, p. 157.
- (844) De Sede, p. 79.
- (845) De Sede, p. 175.
- (846) p. 118. To advance his argument, Alcacer do *Sal* became Alcacer do *Sol*, and *Oureana* became *Ouranea*. Against Fatima, anything is permissible!
- (847) De Sede, p. 193-195.

- (848) De Sede, p. 138.
- (849) De Sede, p. 142.
- (850) De Sede, p. 25 & 27.
- (851) J. Robinson, *Peut-on se fier au Nouveau Testament?* p. 74, Lethielleux 1980.
- (852) De Sede, p. 65.
- (853) For example, the scandalous calumny which accuses the chaplains of Lourdes of fabricating the miraculous well! (p. 153-154) De Sede is careful not to give the source of this gossip. R. Laurentin tells us anyway: «A phony document completely fabricated by Bonnefon at the beginning of the century, as I established in 1858, in “*Lourdes, Documents authentiques*”, I, p. 145-146.» (Rev. des Sc. philos. & théolog. April 1978, p, 295).
- (854) De Sede, p. 193.
- (855) Barthas, p. 209.
- (856) De Sede, p. 93.
- (857) De Sede, p. 265-266.
- (858) Martins dos Reis, *Sintese Critica, Apêndice, Documental Fotografico.*
- (859) De Sede, p. 137-142.
- (860) De Sede, p. 94.
- (861) De Sede, p. 184-186; 192-193.
- (862) De Sede, p. 139-140.
- (863) p. 138, note 2.
- (864) Dom J.-Nesmy, p. 151.
- (865) De Sede, p. 237.
- (866) p. 19.
- (867) Michel Agnellet, *Miracles at Fatima*, p. 113-219, Paris 1958.
- (868) Resiac, 164 pages, 1972; 2nd ed. 1977.
- (869) *The Doves of the Virgin*, p. 3 & p. 11-12.
- (870) De Sede, p. 272.
- (871) *The Doves of the Virgin*, p. 101-102.
- (872) De Sede, p. 267-270; 208-211.
- (873) De Sede, p. 210-211.
- (874) De Sede, p. 117.
- (875) De Sede, p. 255.
- (876) *Broteria*, January 1978, p. 55-64.
- (877) *Broteria*, January 1978, p. 56.
- (878) *Le Figaro*, May 10, 1967; *Historia*, May 1982.
- (879) *La Vérité de Fatima*, p. 159.
- (880) *Fatima in the Light of History*, 1948, p. 216, Alonso, *The Old and New*

History of Fatima, p. 94.

(881) De Sede, p. 217-226; 274-275;

(882) De Sede, p. 219-224.

(883) *Documentation Catholique*, March 19, 1967, col. 546-547, 550.

(884) Quoted by S. Martins dos Reis, *Sintese Critica de Fatima*, p. 11.

(885) Cf. *Fatima and Criticism* and *The Old and New History of Fatima*, from which we draw almost the whole substance of our exposition.

(886) De Marchi, op. cit., p. 350-351.

(887) Statement of Cardinal Cerejeira, *Doc. Cath.*, March 19, 1967, col. 552.

(888) Statement to Father Jongen, De Marchi, p. 344.

(889) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 50.

(890) S. Martins dos Reis, *Na Orbita de Fatima*, p. 128-129. Quoted by Alonso, Eph. Mar., 1972, p. 290-292.

(891) *The Old and New History of Fatima*, p. 98, note 57.

(892) Lucy confided to Father Jongen that the Bishop of Leiria had advised her to say nothing. For his part the bishop confirmed this to Canon Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 50.

(893) Alonso, *Old and New History*, p. 85.

(894) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 49.

(895) *Memoirs*, p. 61. (Fr. Ed.)

(896) Barthas, *Fatima, Great Marvel of the XXth Century*, p. 41.

(897) Alonso, *Old and New History*, p. 87.

(898) Cf. *supra*, chap. 1, p. 16-19.

(899) «Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore You profoundly and I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the earth, in reparation for all the outrages, sacrileges and indifference by which He Himself is offended. And by the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of You the conversion of poor sinners.»

(900) *Streven*, p. 145.

(901) To Father Jongen, February 1946; De Marchi, p. 342.

(902) An excellent article by Father Veloso, “Still Some Confusion and Errors on Fatima”, underlines the contradiction, placing the texts of the Pope and Father Dhanis side by side. *Broteria*, February 1953, p. 185.

(903) *Historia*, May 1982, p. 46.

(904) “A Look at Fatima and Evaluation of a Discussion”, p. 403, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, May 16, 1953.

(905) Alonso, *The Old and New History*, p. 90.

(906) *The Truth of Fatima*, p. 246, note 11.

(907) Journet has the audacity to attack Fatima so vehemently, yet by his own admission he is relying on only one text: an edition of Dhanis by Otto Karrer which already exaggerated the negative conclusions.

(908) Alonso, *Fatima and Criticism*, p. 410.

(909) NRT, p. 581.

(910) Cf. *supra* Chapter I, p. 31-35.

(911) NRT, p. 184.

(912) NRT, p. 606.

(913) NRT, p. 585-586.

(914) NRT, p. 580.

(915) We know this from a conference by the Fatima expert, Father Caillon.

(916) *Streven*, conclusion, p. 213.

(917) *What Our Lady Asks of Us*, p. 134.

(918) NRT, p. 606.

(919) More than one passage where St. Pius X denounced the perfidy of the Modernists' methods fits him like a glove, for example: «Reprimanded and censured, they continue with boundless audacity, while they deceitfully appear to submit. They hypocritically bow their heads as if to submit, while with all their thoughts and all their energies, they pursue their plans with greater audacity than ever.» (no. 37)

(920) *La Civiltà Cattolica*, May 16, 1953, p. 393.

(921) NRT, p. 606.

(922) *La Civiltà Cattolica*, p. 404.

(923) *Ibid.*, p. 401.

(924) *La Civiltà Cattolica*, p. 405-406.

(925) *La Verité de Fatima*, p. 246.

(926) De Marchi, p. 115.

(927) *Barthas Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 49.

(928) Ecclesiastes 4:12.

(929) Alonso, *Old and New History*, p. 82.

(930) Alonso, op. cit., p. 91.

(931) p. 91.

(932) Alonso's introduction to the *Memoirs*.

(933) This first account was published by S. Martins dos Reis in *Uma Vida*, 1973, p. 305-321.

(934) *Memoirs*, (Fr. Ed.), p. 104.

(935) *Memoirs*, (Fr. Ed.), p. 180.

(936) *Memoirs*, Introduction.

(937) De Marchi, p. 344.

(938) Memoirs IV, p. 156.

(939) Ibid., p. 158.

(940) As St. John of the Cross explains, the highest mystical graces almost irresistibly move the soul to keep silence. Cf. Spiritual Canticle, stanza XXXII.

(941) Memoirs, p, 154.

(942) Mother Marie-Thérèse Vauzou could neither understand nor pardon the seer for this complete silence on the “three secrets”, and consequently the most intimate aspects of her soul. St. Bernadette had much to suffer from the coldness and lack of understanding of her Novice Mistress. Cf. Msgr. Trochu, *Saint Bernadette according to the Authentic Documents*, p. 393, Vitte, 1958.